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Revisiting 2002 Gujarat Carnage in Githa Hariharan's *Fugitive Histories*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in English

By

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Letter of Recommendation

Purna Dhodari has completed his thesis entitled “Revisiting 2002 Gujarat Carnage in Githa Hariharan’s *Fugitive Histories*” under my supervision. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Revisiting 2002 Gujarat Carnage in Githa Hariharan’s *Fugitive Histories*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Purna Dhodari in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in English has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Purna Dhodari

## Revisiting 2002 Gujarat Carnage in Githa Hariharan's *Fugitive Histories*

*Abstract: This present research paper focuses on the issues of power politics and the ideology of Hindu ruler in Githa Hariharan's Fugitive Histories. Beside this, the researcher has tried to find why Mahatma Gandhi has been criticized and compared with Muslim Asad in the novel. In addition to this, he differentiates the official and unofficial narration of the Gujarat pogrom history and attempts to prove the people in the power dominate and subjugate the powerless because of their inherent ideology. Therefore, revealing out the issue of brutality of the state, to provide justice to the victims of the Gujarat Carnage (2002) and to excavate the real history in the text are the main focuses of the study. In order to analyze the text, the new historicist concepts like power, discourse, metahistory, anecdote etc. are used in this research. By using new historicists' ideas, the research establishes an idea that the state, ideology and powerful people play dominant role to make history and sustain in power to reach in power and be dominant in the state.*

**Key words:** New historicism, power, ideology, brutality, state and history.

The project entitled "Revisiting 2002 Gujarat Carnage in Githa Hariharan's *Fugitive Histories*" deals with the misuse of the power politics which plays a dominant role behind the suffering of the people of Gujarat in 2002, after the Godhra train burnt on February 28 and riot it followed. The state was full of havoc because of the religious conflict and people became refugees in their own country. The novelist has attempted to rewrite the history, provokes multiple discourses and tries to provide justice to the Muslim people in the state. It exposes the suffocation created by such fanatics, preferring to burn schools in the name of constructing temples and mosques and humanity has become the victim of inhumanity. Virtues have become obsolete, meaningless and a laughing stock because of the religious clash between the two

castes, Hindus and Muslims. The text is analyzed from the new historicist perspective of Michel Foucault, Stephen Greenblatt, Catherine Gallener, Louis Montrose, Althusser and Hayden White. From the new historicist perspective, the objective of the research paper is to dig out real history of the horrible carnage and the communalism issues in Gujarat during the time of the burning of the Sabarmati express and the riots it followed.

Githa Hariharan has noted in the novel, “On 28 February, 2002, the Sabarmati Express was attacked on Godhra Station in Gujarat and two of its carriages set on fire. The train was carrying Hindu activists on their way back from Ayodhya. In the day, and weeks that followed, the Muslims of Gujarat became the target of brutal violence” (40). Hariharan has imagined the character named Sara who is going to make documentary film about the Gujarat carnage with Nina.

In order to forward the narrative events of the novel, it is divided into three parts, titled as ‘Missing Persons’, ‘Crossing Borders’ and ‘Funeral Rites’ respectively. The narrative is interwoven in existing as well as retrospective mode involving three strong female characters Sara, Mala and Yasmin. Mala presents a challenging life after the death of her husband Asad. She lives in the hallucinations of Asad’s presence and connects with him through memories and his meaningful sketches. Through the painting of Asad she remembers the days where Gujarat was under the chaos of religious conflict after the train blaze in Godhara.

Sara is a progressively driven female character, trying to narrate the real story of suffers who wants to narrate the voices of Gujarat people in their own voices. She wants to make documentary film with her friend Nina. She becomes a coherent link between the three parts of the story and also a narrator of fictionalized real-life incident which shattered Gujarat in 2002. She lives in Mumbai with her

roommate Nina. She leaves her job in exchange of her roommate 's offer of penning the experiences of Muslim women forced to leave their home after the Godhra pogrom.

The third female character, Yasmin is the mouthpiece of the atrocities and the hate crime to which the veiled ladies of her sect became victim at the hands of right winged Hindu fanatics, who has lost her brother in the post Godhra riots, who have seen the traumatic events. She explains that she has to say something about the events that is put secret in the documented history. Thus, she revisits the text from new historicist perspective and represents the condition of Muslims people.

The major objective of the research is to explore the unstable and unsteady situation of the India during the Gujarat riot and its consequences on different aspects of life and the brutality of the Hindus ruler which outwardly shows themselves as peace lovers but inwardly use the state power to rule for obtaining power and superiority and finds out why Mahatma Gandhi being criticized in the novel and search why the novelist has brought the issue of the historical figure Gandhi while narrating the incident in the novel. Was Gandhi really bad as Sara described in the novel? Why does Sara bring his reference is comparing with his father? Beside this, there was one group or the state power who was trying to prove their uninvolved in the pogrom and other marginal group were blaming to the people in the power. The people in the power have their own definition regarding the incident which they want to prove truth and rule over the ordinary people.

Githa Hariharan was born in Comboitore, and a commonwealth prize winner. She has presented about the effects of the power politics in the novel, *Fugitive Histories*. Her writing is greatly influenced by the entanglement of the feminism, but she has narrated about the incident of the misuse of the power politics and the horrible

feelings on her because of the terrible riots in Gujarat February, 2002, which she presents in her writings of the novel. The cruelty, brutality, absurdity and inhumaneness were the main impact on her. However, *Fugitive Histories* has wide critical acclaim from different perspectives of feminism, role of patriarchy but the historical issues or contextual reading of the novel is not found, so I felt it necessary to be done in appropriate way.

Githa Hariharan writes herself on the front cover of the novel as, “*Fugitive Histories* exposes the legacy of prejudice that sometimes insidiously, sometimes perceptibly, continues to affect disparate lives in present day India. It portrays the web of human connections that binds as much as it divides” (n.p.). Beside this, M shora Rao and T Narayan mention, “ Indian Veteran novelist Kushwant singh feels that Githa Hariharan writes with anguish, pain about what is happening in our country and so she put this novel on the top of his list of book” (176).

Mr Shaman comments about the narratives of various Indian writer and argues about the authentic history and sees the importance of alternate history to capture the trauma of communalism in the nation. So, he interprets *Fugitive Histories* as:

Taken together, the diverse narratives, standing at the interface of reality and fiction, represent a kind of historiography that captures the trauma of communalism in the nation. Since there cannot be one authentic history, these narratives offer an alternate truth or perspective, apart from the more popular and official narrative. (31)

The novelist has visited Ahmedabad in 2004 and spent a lot of time there. The events Sara feels to narrate are same what she heard and saw after the post Godhra

riots. In an interview with Baghshree, Hariharan herself said about the *Fugitive Histories* as:

Sara hesitates to rewrite the story to tell other people stories. Your own story too consists of other people's stories. But it is always important to be aware that you are speaking on somebody else's behalf of all Muslims and Swami on behalf of all Hindus. Before you know it, everybody gets lumped in to homogenous identities. So, *Fugitive Histories* is the story of other people in the society. (*Hindu Business Line* )

The other people here are the Muslim people who were victims during that period. The novelist has visited to Gujarat and collected all the trials and tribulations faced by the Muslim people in the society. Therefore, the novel begins with the "missing person" as the first introduction of the novel which serves an introduction that narrates about the feminist society and patriarchal role whereas second has the traumatic effects and in the last part, she has brought about the references of Mahatma Gandhi and compared with the political leader of India.

After the Gujarat riots various newspaper criticizes about the riots and they blame the contemporary ruler of the Gujarat state. But the real evaluation should be done by evaluating their virtue either they show good respect and honor to other or not. Hence, the research is focused to represent the power politics of State people and to challenge the established facts and how truth is distorted by the official history. At the one hand the research moves on parallelly with the official history and tries to find why Gandhi has been criticized in the novel.

*Fugitive Histories* attempts to show the manifestation of the trauma suffered by the people who became refugees in their own counties. To this day, "the disposed

of Gujarat live in safe areas- Muslims, ghettos bad for instance, people who used to be part of the city's life, bakers, auto drivers, shopkeepers, engineers, school teachers are now refugees in their own city" (42). All the people were forced to live their places. Through this novel the writer expresses the traumatic affect because of the various inhumane effects caused by the politically connived carnage. As a writer, Hariharan is preoccupied with stories. According to her, the true merit of a fiction-writer lies in telling other peoples' stories. This exercise grants the author an opportunity to explore the consciousness of her characters. And the access to the consciousness of other individuals is largely governed by the author's social, political, cultural and historical consciousness. Thus, "telling other peoples' stories places enormous responsibility on the author who must always remain aware of it" (92).

Similarly, Hariharan describes how people by religious fervor didn't mind killing others of the same kind. Muslims were charred, brutally mutilated. Godhra in a Muslim locality. In the days and week that followed, the Muslims of Gujarat became the target of brutal violence. The statement of survivors, eyewitnesses and relief workers suggests that state officials and the police connived with the attackers (42).

After the riots the local people put a condition to the Muslims that they would be allowed to return to their homes if they withdrew the Firs in case they have been filed. The citizens tribunal showed without any doubt the role of the state machinery and police in aiding and abetting the riots, it was a state sponsored riot. As the state is totally in the grip of the Sangh Parivar, the wall of the hatred is sealing the borders between the two communities and the boycott of Muslims in employment and trade is close to the total. It is in this situation that police find it easy to tutor the witness. It

means *Fugitive Histories* presents the traumatic condition of the Muslims in the war who were highly affected by the religious program.

Githa Hariharan has travelled to the different places and collected about the experiences in the novel and Hariharan has narrated the story with the mouth piece of Sara in which the story is narrated as the events and the subject matter of the film. In this regard it becomes clear that though the text has been analyzed through various perspectives by various critics, the theory of new historicism has not been applied, so there exists a strong need to carryout research on this novel from a new perspective. Therefore, this research explores how new historicism is an appropriate to challenge the traditional and documented history and gives justice to the marginal people living in the history.

New historicism is an approach to literary criticism and literary based premise that a literary work should be considered a product of time, place and historical circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated work of art or text. It has come in opposition to new criticism of formal analysis of works of literature which focuses on the text itself. It was used by new generation of professional critics as ignoring the greater social and political consequences of the production of literary texts. In this sense new historicists reading are more often skeptical, wary, demystifying, critical and even adversarial in comparison to the study of one sided analysis of text.

New historicism was developed in the 1980s primarily through the work of critic Stephen Greenblatt gaining widespread influence in the 1990s and beyond. Favoring Foucault's work as the starting point, new historicism aims at analyzing a literary text as an expression of reaction to the power-structures of the surrounding society. The voices of people who are marginalized, suppressed, oppressed, and back

warded from the mainstream culture get primary focus in new historicism. It means new historicism tries its best to dig out the real history that is sidelined by the people who are in power. It is the propaganda of the people to create false discourse, make it knowledge by universalizing it and later spread it as truth to gain the power and superiority.

Beside this, New historicists are like cultural materialists interested in the questions of circulation, negotiation, profit, and exchange. They take this position further by claiming that cultural activities may be considered as equally important texts for historical analysis. For them history is literature, and interpretation. It is not fact but stories about the past thus subject to interpretation. Every historical age is full of contradictions, baffles, surprises, and disagreements. History and literature are interconnected. All the texts combine to create a web of relationship and ideas. All cultural activities are potentially texts to be read, literature is just one among many. Thus, it demands contextuality of all human thoughts and activities.

For new historicism, every literary text has its own situation, background within discourse, institution social norms, values, characterization, conflicts and social practices that become the document culture of particular space and time. In this regard, Louis Montrose takes new historicism as “a shift from an essential or immanent to a historical, contextual and conjectural model of signification and a general suspicion of closed system totalizes and universals” (313).

Moreover, New historicism as a theoretical approach to literary texts attempts to refigure the relationship between texts and the cultural system in which they were produced. In new historicism, a literary text can only be evaluated in its social, historical and political contexts. Therefore, new historicism attacks the formalist conception of literature as an autonomous aesthetic order that transcends the needs

and interests of a society. A literary text is another form of social significance which is produced by the society and in return is active in reshaping the culture of that society.

Both literary as well as non-literary texts are analysed in equal parameters with reference to the contextual factors are the important aspects of new historical studies, in which they are produced and interpreted. Defining new historicism Catherine Gallagher opines:

New historicism entails reading literary and non-literary texts as constituents of historical discourses that are both inside and outside of texts and that is practitioners generally posit no fixed hierarchy of cause and effect as they trace the connections among texts, discourses, power and the constitution of subjectivity. Since these are the issues new historicists study, it's hardly surprising that they have kindled speculation about their own discursive contexts, commitments to and negotiations of power or the constitution of their historical subjectivity.

(37)

For new historicist, the history should be analyzed in terms of context. The person in power creates their own history. It is the responsibility of the readers to go through the text and analyze what kind of history is put into secret and why? The new historicists make their own kind of discourses in the contextual way in order to constitute the real history. It means new historicism is the way of challenging the so –called documented history that is written by the person who is in power position.

Foucauldian notion of power presents that power is unstable thing. The person who comes in power tries to create his/her own discourse and makes it knowledge to other to follow it. But when the powerful person becomes powerless the power is

handover to another person. In the same line s/he wants to create his/her own discourse and truth and rule the society. In this regard Foucault argues:

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates or rather something which only functions in the form of chain. It is never localized here, never in anybody's hand, never appropriated as a commodity or piece. Power is employed and exercised through a net like organization. And only do individuals circulated between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application. (89)

Power is something which circulates from one person to another person or one system to another. It is like a chain and moves in the hand of different person. The person today in power may not be in the power tomorrow. The powerless victim can be a powerful person in coming days. So, it is never fixed or localized in anybody's hand. It is rather exercised in a net-like organization. Individuals are in the process of undergoing and exercising power. It means all the individual can be the vehicles of power not its application.

As stated in the theory of new historicism, the brutal behavior of the police of state is no other than the presentation of the power by the Hindu groups to gain the superiority position in the world. Though they know that the domination can create a great problem in the world, they continue to dominate the people. When the Hindus were in the power they also dominate the Muslims people brutally in the state rule, it shows the circulation of power from one hand to another hand. Instead the new historicism focuses that the war is inhuman and brutal even though who is the agent of action to create it. The writer somehow challenges the history by portraying

Gujarat carnage two helps the alternate narration to unite between the Muslims and the Hindus. It shows all the Hindus not inhuman and brutal but even the state and the police were making conspiracy against Muslims. Hence the research seeks the humanitarian value on Muslims and inhuman, brutal, treachery and selfish nature on Muslims. It is only the power politics of the Hindus to show themselves peace lover and having the humanitarian value but in reality, it is just the opposite and creating the alternate narration in the history.

The overall thesis will be in the form of an essay which includes introduction, textual analysis and conclusion. In the first part, a brief introduction to the thesis, its objectives and problems, literature review, major argument and outline of overall thesis are included. Similarly, in the second part, the textual analysis and review of theorists are included. In the final part, a summary along with finding of the thesis will be given to conclude the research paper.

*Fugitive History* reveals the hidden fact that how power politics and ideology functions in the society as well as among the individuals. It excavates that truth in the society is constructed by the people in the power. Each society creates a regime of truth which runs through its own distinctive believes and values. Similarly, the facts regarding to the issue of Mahatma Gandhi is also interpreted by different people in the society. Different people have interpreted Gandhi in different ways. Some critics consider him as the great freedom fighter and some as saints.

Foucault argues, "Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produces and sustains it and in turn it affects the power which it induces and which extends it to the creation of general truth" (132). The power which is exercised by the powerful person outwardly seems it as if they are working for the public interest but inwardly such power becomes corrupt and self-centered. It does not act on

the public rather it violates the right of common people and dominates them in every social aspect.

In the novel all the Muslim people were became the victim of power politics which is narrated with the help of Yasmin in the story. It shows that how rude and inhuman people become when they want to get the power. The novel presents the power politics of the contemporary scenario of Gujarat from the new historicist perspective. It centers on the issue those hardships, pathos, troubles, misery and hurdles faced by the characters faced by the brutality of the state, biasedness of the history towards the Muslim people to provide justice to the victims.

The most stunning situation and the humiliation of a women comes out , as in the police station scene. A woman as an object of sexual satisfaction, without heart, feelings of hatred and shock of revulsion comes out in the following police encounter. The police were not paying attention to the Ammi's complains. She narrates the unattentive policeman as, "The first policeman leans back in his chair and stares at Ammi as if she is naked. As if she is not wearing a sari, a burqa thrown over it so only her face and feet are visible" (134). This proves about the brutality of policeman to the Gujarat carnage's victim in the novel. Again, in order to support the state, the second policeman snarls:

'What is your son's name?' 'Akbar', Ammi says again, thought they have given their son's name at least ten times.

'Akbar what? Mohammad? Ahmand?'

'The names become ugly taunts in the policeman's mouth' ..... and when Ammi says, 'He's in college, second year BSc' .... Than, there is a terrible smile on his face. "College? Why did not you say earlier?" .... 'he growls with satisfactions. Too many of you in college it

seems,' ..... and adds sarcastically. 'Has he eloped with a Hindu girl? Or left home to join the terrorists?' ..... When Ammi adds: 'He is just a boy's.... 'Just a student. He doesnot know anything about politics' 'The policeman looks at each other and burst in to laughter.' With rock respect the second policeman says, 'Begum,' 'this is probably what Osama Bin Laden's mother says of him' (134).

The above scene brings out the fact that the government machinery was in hand and glove in carrying out Muslim Massacre in 2002 riots. Githa Hariharan has shown that Yasmin is bold to live her life in her own way in spite of her brother Akabar being lost, their house burnt down: "They were so tired they wanted to sleep and never get up, but sleep refused to come anywhere near them .The general hatred of Hindus and Muslims is expressed: "Muslims Quite India- or we will fuck your mothers"(138).

This proves the brutality of the state to the Muslim people in India. The religious fundamentalists were shouting, "Muslim in India have two places: Pakistan and Kabristan" (192). whereas the victims were becoming helpless in their own state and expressing their grief as, "We are orphans. We have no police, no government, no country" (164). Similarly, Halliday has asserted about Gujarat politics as," the mainline of the conflict is not between Hindus and Muslims but between communal and secular Hindus and the major cause of the rise of the BJP (Bharat Janta Party) ..... " (172). This statement proves state ideology as the main cause of the conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India.

The narrator also wants to raise their own voice in the history. She remembers the Asad ideas while telling about the other sufferings. The use of authoritarianism is clearly shown because police also follows the state ideologies and the power of the state.

“Missing is not so bad” (135), says the harassed sub- inspector, sending Ammi and Abba. Here, a general student who does not understand about the politics is blamed with the terrorist in the war. How the Muslims voice and sentiment are ignored. Having burnt her books and desires, she doesnot go to school any more. Her father having lost his business is now struggling hard to make both the ends meet. Sara wants Yasmin to unfold her dark grief. Similarly, A woman called Zainab narrates the prejudice and disparity the Muslim children have to face, she tells Sara about her son Nasir’s incident and discrimination in the school classroom:

My son left the school... we wanted him to study in the English medium school so he could be an engineer...but the principal was doing partition works. He’d ask Nasir in front of everybody else, Aren’t you from Pakistan? He kept calling my Nasir a terrorist till the child couldn’t bear it anymore. (156)

The narration of experiences expressed by the Muslim ladies to Sara and Nina are so tearful, that the cassette players they have brought are not enough for the saga of unpacked emotions called stories, “all the women and girls and the little boys in the room, have also become recording machines” (158). They (Muslim people) narrate their accounts one by one as:

we heard the crowd was gathering in our area...they had swords, pipes, hockey Sticks, soda, lemon bottles, saffron flags...petrol bombs and gas cylinders.... shouting “kill them, cut them, burn them alive!” ...our men were killed.... mothers and sisters raped. The body piled up... they had trishul with them. They wore saffron cloth around their heads. There is no mystery about who they were. (159)

They have reached to the police station so many times and tells them about the missing about the Akbar. Akbar family is sad with the brutality of the government which has supported the government rather than providing justice to the victims and narrated in the novel as:

The better policeman simply said we cannot help you, says Feroza.

They said we have no orders to help you, you better learn to protect yourselves if you want to live in Hindustan. They were the better ones, the good ones who simply stood by watching while or homes burnt.

The rest of them burst tear-gas shells at us or shot at us if we tried to defend ourselves. (160)

The people were shouting because of the fear they feel after the Gujarat carnage. The Muslims in the state feel helpless in front of the police too. “We are orphans. We have no police, no government, no country” (164). The police were also following the rule of the state and ideology. So, according to Louis Althusser, “the ideological state apparatus function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression even if ultimately because, this is very attenuated and concealed even symbolic” (173). These police officers appear to be backed by the government, this is the use of ideology with which the ruling classes control them “as a way to form to unify the nation” (54). The brutality of the state is the politics of the war. It represents how inhuman and brutal is the state and how the people in the power want to remain in the power for a long time. Their good aspects and humanitarian aspects were not highlighted in the history.

Only Muslim people were criticized rather than providing sympathy to the people because of the ‘state apparatus’ as Althusser has said. The police are functioning because of the ‘Repressive State Apparatus’ and the “Repressive State

Apparatus functions by violence whereas Ideological State Apparatuses function by ideology” (Althusser 55). Here, we can find both the ideological influence of state and repression towards the Muslims people of Gujarat.

Therefore, with the deployment of police, it demonstrates the working mechanism of SA-by violence by which the Muslim people are subjugated which state that the police in Gujarat also act according to the state principle and they are forcing the incidents to suppress the people in the history. In order to state the real circumstance Sara criticizes Mahatma Gandhi who focus only on the issue of non-violence (Ahimsa). But the text also analyses the contemporary politics and bring the anecdotal references of Gandhi in the text. Because for Finman:

it is the anecdote that can open up history in so far as it amounts to the narration of a singular events which uniquely exceeds its literary status and any narrative schema, and so achieves a referential access to the real. The anecdote introduces an aperture in to the schema of history, ‘by establishing an event as an event within and yet without the framing context of historical successivity, i.e. it does so only in so far as its narration both comprises and refracts the narration it reports.

(270)

Sara has compared the great ‘Father of nation’ as comparing with one with Muslim Akabar and another with Muslim Asad. She presents both as the ‘missing persons’. And again, she presents him as the dual character. He is being compared with the artist Asad. When Sara comes home with questions about next to religion. Asad told her, “Don’t be ashamed of you are and don’t be ashamed of who you are not. Really, he was as bad as Gandhi. His answer was never straight when the question was”

(180).

Sara visits Sabarmati Ashram popularly known as Gandhi Ashram for the documentary report. Gujarat is the place where a great leader Mahatma Gandhi was born and propagated non- violence and it was the same place violence was filled with. It is the irony of the life: where peace has to prevail, there is violence arson, abuse, rape and all the undeserving things happening.

The issue and idea of Mahatma Gandhi seems here very problematical because he is considered as the ‘father of the nation.’ He is being compared with the Artist Muslim Asad. Or, Hindu fundamentalist is being compared with Muslim artist not positively but negatively. In the words of Gyanendra Pandey, Gandhi was “the undisputed leader of a movement over which he had little command” (5). In contrast to the absence of Gandhi, in the novel, he has been considered and compared in ironical manner. No body listen to the message of the Gandhi in Gujarat Carnage and Sara narrates the Sabarmati Ashram as:

A barbette perches on its treetop like a green breasted muezzin and calls out its one-toned message: truth is god, god is truth. A pair of bushy- tailed squirrels race down the tree trunk, refusing to listen. But the barbette shrills the message endlessly, it does not care if it is old hat and it has been saying the same thing a thousand times a day for years. (173)

It means the issue and the message of Gandhi is unheard in the contemporary time. Bringing the issue of Mahatma Gandhi in the novel really search for the political scenario and its effects during that time in the novel. It seems the questions towards Mahatma Gandhi. New historicist search for the certain types of peculiarities which gather the different ideas of the past.

New historicism is always anti-established on the side of liberal ideas and personal freedom. It questions the long-established truths and facts claiming that they are relative and affected by the historical condition of the era. Thus, they should be redrawn from the new historicist perspective. In this sense new historicism excavates multiple truths existed in the society thereby dismantling the so-called documented real history. In the novel the character Sara criticized Mahatma Gandhi, his real history is distorted by the writer who being Hindus take the support of Muslim in the India. The writer vehemently criticized the trend of Indian being peace lover, other (marginalized group) as war-monger and Hindus ruler as the peace maker. She presents that Gandhi has been a ghost and nobody is listening the message of Gandhi. In addition to this Mahatma Gandhi is questioned by the writer opining that the official history is beneficial for the ruler who only becomes the ladder of power for the powerful politicians.

New historicism as an approach to literary texts negates both the autonomy of individual genius, talent of author and autonomy of the texts. It assumes literature is the production of the foregrounding techniques. It contains politico-cultural, social and economic background. So, these aspects are inseparable while analyzing historical texts and author himself/ herself remain in the grip of historical time period while producing the texts. Therefore, history is included in literature. Hence, literature is not only the chronological series of historical elements rather it actively exploits history through its participation in discursive practices. In this perspective, Louis Montrose argues, "The new historical criticism could claim to be in refusing unexamined distinction between 'contexts' in resisting a tendency to posit and privilege autonomous individual whether an author or work to be set against a social

or literary background” (398). In the text *The New Historicism* edited by H. Aram Vesser, he further Claims:

Though sometimes reproducing the methodological shortcomings of such older idealist and empiricist modes of historical criticism, but also often appropriating their prodigious scholarly labors to good effect, the newer historical criticism is new in its refusal of unproblematized distinctions between “literature” and “history,” between “text” and “context” : new in resisting a prevalent tendency to posit and privilege a unified and autonomous individual- whether an author or a work – to be set against a social or literary background.

(18)

Louis Montrose asserts that the new historicists view the text against the social or literary background. They view the literary text from the new perspective in which the text has put something into secret. To find out the reality the context of the time should be focused along with the text. Similarly, in the novel the writer tries to show that the history of the Gujarat Carnage and the post Gujarat carnage in which histories try to narrate the facts in different ways, bring out the real history which shows that we can find one story narrate in different ways. *Fugitive Histories* is a story which itself has the subject matter of the Gujarat riot and its terrible effects on the people. Its context is established in an introductory chapter and few paragraphs in the concluding chapter.

The novel tries to provide justice to the people living in Gujarat by narrating through the Muslim perspective. All the major characters are the Muslim women. The novel tries to alter the history by presenting the bond of marriage relationship with Hindu and the Muslim which shows the unity between the two religions. Beside

this it is attempting to narrate the Gujarat history in different ways as narrated in the official history which New Historicism seeks to challenge it. Because New historicism believes that every literary product is affected by the social, economic and political, contextual events happened in the history.

Through the portrayal of the sentences the writer shows the effects of the state power upon the marginal people in the Gujarat carnage and the post carnage in the story. The police man also follows the order of the society and they did not get the order to save the people in the history. This shows the effects of power and experience to see the things from an alternative way. in which powerful person enhance common people for their vested interest. When the good police man was there to prevent the war and to protect the life and the property of the people, they replied as the “no orders to save you (192).

There is something awful about having to speak form someone else, write report or petition or, even worse, make a film or make up a novel about other people. It is like speaking on behalf of missing persons. The voice that is not narrated in the history is narrated by the new historical writer. The writer also does not feel safe to narrate the story to provide justice to the people living in the society. Therefore, by bringing the idea of the history, she wants to provide justice to the people by narrating the voices of the Muslim people.

It seems a dangerous thing to do, that going inside someone looking closely at their dreams and defeats their suffering, being them so you can speak for them in their voices. Therefore, the novelist has argued, “Because all along there is a nagging little voice asking, can your voice ever be theirs? And who are you to speak for them?” (191-192).

So, with the help of the Asad's voice Hariharan is not free of the fear to narrate the voice of the marginalized people and search a sort of relation to tell about the history of the people. She collected all the necessary events and sufferings of the people in her cassette by taking the help of Yasmin. After collecting the incidents required for the documentary film, she makes a visit to the Sabarmati Ashram, sits by the side of the Sabarmati river, to recall: "Ishwar Allah terenam sabko sanmati de Bhagwan"(175). This place "had gained importance in India's national politics especially after the late 1910s, when Mahatma Gandhi became deeply involved in city's political and social activities (14).

In the official book *Modi Muslim and India*, it is narrated as, "If every time there is an inter-communal conflict, the majority is blamed regardless of the merits of the question... the springs of traditional tolerance will dry up" (187). But alternately, the Muslim victims replied, "Government? what Government says every Hindu will vote for them because they got rid of Muslims?" The same people who killed us and looted us and took away our homes. The same people who are now supposed to protect us" (164). From the two different stated facts, every incident is narrated on the basis of their benefits and ideologies to sustain in power for a longer period of time.

It analyzes the distortion of the facts and the problematic form of the history. The power politics make the false rumor that fighting for the nation is great achievements in ones lives which shows the brutality of the state during that time. All this incident show that there is the brutality of the state, and police does not act according to the law and the order but according to the 'state apparatus'. The subjective narration of the history blames Hindus and the leaders of Gujarat but the official book, *Modi Muslim and Gujarat* by Madhu Purnima Kishwar presents the same ideas as:

...no evidence to show that the chief minister and/or any other minister(s) in his Council of ministers or police officers had played any role in the Godhra incident or that there was any lapse on their part in the matter of providing protection, relief...to the victims of communal riots or in the matter of not complying with the recommendations and directions given by National Human Rights Commission. (187)

Various commissions and INGOs were writing the same events differently. Some of the books, newspaper was accusing riot and the post Godhra riot differently. Among the various texts, the book *Modi Muslim and India* defends the accusation towards the political leader, police officers and even the chief minister and the state. Kishwar defends in the text as:

the first three persons to be killed in mob violence on February 28 were Hindus. Therefore, the theory that the post-Godhra riots of 2002 were part of a well-crafted BJP conspiracy is all bunkum. Nor were they as one-sided as they came to be projected. (224)

One the one hand literature project about the history at on way whereas the history books try to prove the idea in another way. *Fugitive Histories* narrates the suffering of the people and the hand of the state upon the sufferings of the people. Again, the history book also has the ideas invented as similar to the literature. In this issue, Hayden White argues:

The types of questions that metahistory (the field) asked tended to involve the status of the historical text as a “literary artifact,” “a sign system,” “a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse.” As critique, metahistory takes as its object the discipline of history’s “reluctance to consider historical narratives as what they most

manifestly are: verbal fictions [my emphasis], the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences. (130)

It proves that the people who are in power represent each other in their own way. As Branningham wrote, “All texts are about representation, and representations are about how we see ourselves are seen by others, and project ourselves to others” (219). Therefore, whatever written about the history, people and events are interpreted by other in their own way rather than the factual narrations which blurs the boundary between the histories and fictions.

Michel Foucault is the prominent figure of new historicism. He opines that people in the power create a discourse to rule the people by making it a universal knowledge. The same knowledge becomes truth when it is circulated among and between the people. Through that truth they maintain their power which he calls discursive formation. It means there is no single history there are histories. When one person is in power s/he creates one history. S/he does not remain long last in the same power. Again, another person comes in power s/he creates another kind of truth or history. This process continues till the power-seeking tendency is on the earth. It makes not a single history but multiple histories on the profit of the power stakeholders. For him, discourses are everywhere in the society. Discourses are inherent even in social, political, cultural and even economic power. Here, discourse is interconnected with power, knowledge and truth. So, discourse is inseparable from power because discourse is vital and ordering force that governs every social and political institution. In the book *The Foucault Primer* Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace assert about truth, “Foucault then is more dubious about notions of absolute truth, or

indeed of definitive philosophical answers to political questions. And he is far from believing that it is the task of intellectuals to provide such things. But this does not mean that there is no truth” (19).

According to Foucault the power holders make the discourses according to their benefits and profits. And this kind of discourses helps them to create a false propaganda known as truth and have control over the common people. It means discourse is always formative and action oriented; it is constructed to gain particular goals. Thus, any form discourse is considered to be a source of power. This is why Foucault says, “Discourse moves in, and as the flows of power” (23). In the same way in the novel, the people in the power makes the discourse that they are taking the care of the victims and they were given good security but the marginal groups regularly blame for the insecurity in the government and criticizes the government as, “Government? what Government says every Hindu will vote for them because they got rid of Muslims?” The same people who killed us and looted us and took away our homes. The same people who are now protect us” (164). They Gujarat government has created the false truth for their benefits and advantages in order to make their people fight with them and have an antagonism relationship not the brotherhood. Hariharan’s point is here to excavate the reality what has happened in the Gujarat and who were responsible for the war. She presents how the state people makes their own story by creating story themselves, proves the state remains as the passive only serve for the Muslims because only Hindus vote for them.

Hariharan has brought the reference of Gandhi in the novel because the contemporary political leaders were compared with Mahatma Gandhi. Sahani writes, “Ahmedabad gained importance in India’s national politics especially after the late

1910s, when Mahatma Gandhi became deeply involved in the city's political and social activities" (14). Further he argues:

In a recent study Ahmedabad was defined as one of the most 'riot prone' cities in India. The propagators of Hindu nationalism have perceived Gujarat as strategically important to the success of their agenda. Senior members of the Sangh Parivar have seen the state as the Hindutva laboratory. After the BJP's victory in the 2002 Gujarat assembly elections the VHP leader. (14)

Several poor Muslims to whom Sara spoke underscored their perception that the antagonism of Hindus against them was unprecedented. The victims of Gujarat Carnage believed that the government has let them down, so they keep faith for their survival in the hands of Allah.

Similarly, Sahani writes:

The propagators of Hindu nationalism have perceived Gujarat as strategically important to the success of their agenda. Senior members of the Sangh Parivar have seen the state as the Hindutva laboratory. After the BJP's victory in the 2002 Gujarat assembly elections the VHP leader, Pravin Togadia, asserted that 'the experiment of Hindutva "lab" would be repeated . . . The Gujarat elections will change the ideology, color and composition of all political parties. (14)

Hariharan's position as an advocate of Gandhian ideology becomes very much clear when she criticizes Gandhian discourse on secularism, nationalism and non-violence (*ahimsa*). In order to provide Justice to the Muslims victims, she has criticized Gandhi because she does not find about the same ideologies though he has said in the ideology of the contemporary leaders of India. Kishwar narrates the contemporary

ruler as “It is my conviction and shraddha (faith) that on economic issues, Gandhi is relevant even today.) But the chief minister once said that, “If I have such a powerful legacy, it is my responsibility to bring it to the world’s attention.... In Buddhism, I see dharma entrenched in karuna (compassion)” (388). Hariharan has satirized the issues in the novel,

in the dictionary of satyagraha, there is no enemy. Keep your soul force if you want, You Mian lover,’ the mob roars at him. There is more powerful force with us. (The symbol which were used by the Hindu mobs were also the symbols which were used by Gandhi). You may think I am no match for you, he says gently. I don’t have spears Kerosene, flags or soda bottles. I only have a spinning wheel, a pair of cymbals and a few old hymns. And I am only a ghost now, he confesses, though he looks far from humble. But I will never give up. The word defeat is not to be found in my dictionary. (Besides, this the way of fasting is also being criticized in the novel), “He fast and suffers, but he also loves a good fight, even if he is only fighting with himself. He is a human ghost, he is all too human. (176-177)

Therefore, to tell a lot about the political history and hidden story, she critiques the Hindu rulers in a simplistic and monolithic way. So, she falsifies historical reality when he brings the anecdotal issues of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a politician of the Indian National Congress who supports advocates for ahimsa (non-violence). But in *New York Times*, it is written, “Watching Narendra Modi over the last month, as he began to carve out an image for himself beyond India’s borders, one might gotten the impression that Mohandas K Gandhi was his ideological Progenition , or running mate”(Kumar n.p.). Similarly, Barry writes in *New York Times*, “Mr. Modi reputation

as a Hindu Hardliner was defined in 2002, when bloody secretariat riot broke out under his watch as chief minister of the state Gujarat.” This Portrait the Gandhi Philosophy to achieve and serve the techniques of non-violence. By taking this issue in the ground level the novel focuses on the shattered religious ideological conflict in the novel. So, in order to provide justice to people of the Gujarat Carnage, she made comparison between the past leader Mahatma Gandhi and the contemporary leaders at that time. Therefore, the physical portrait of Gandhi has been brought, his way of fasting and his ways of achieving goal has been criticized. It is found that because of the ideology of Hindu leader as the role model of the ideology, the state Ideology and the brutal role of the political leader of Gujarat, she has satirized Gandhi as the anecdotal reference. In order to create the various discourse to control and sustain their ideologies in the issue regarding to the Gujarat Carnage different fabrications of histories were made.

On the one hand, it shows no differences between the official and non-official history because both poses the doubt and both of the narration are unbelievable. the unofficial historical representation can be understood as a set of counterclaims to the basic claims included in official history and that the unofficial history is generated through a kind of "hidden dialogically" with the official one. The state has presented its own version of history as marginalized and excluded from public contexts dominated by the nationalist account of history and seems the exclusion of people in the history.

We do not find the differences in the subjective and the objective history but it depends upon the beholder. Regarding to the burn of the Godhra train, the text *Modi Muslim and Media* by Madhu Kumar collects various issues surrounded in the societies and several stories to blame each other to make the factual claims for their

own benefit entitled like, “Karsevaks cooking on a stove that causes fire” (203), “Media spin Ramsevaks invited trouble” (206), “Abduction of Muslim girl provoked Muslims people” (203) etc.

Different people who were making their own story make history on the basis of their benefits. Muslim people construct story on the basis of their ideologies. Similarly, Hindus make their own discourse. It is similar to Hayden White arguments, “any historical events can be represented by a variety of different stories, the representation of history should be seen as contingent less upon the events themselves, and more upon the rather arbitrary narrative decisions (consciousness of the historians)” (3). Therefore, we find real contrast between the official history and the non-official history. In Hariharan’s book it is narrated as the police never save the Muslim people in the history. They create this truth for their benefits and advantages in order to make their people fight with them and have an antagonism relationship not the brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims. Hariharan’s point is here to excavate the reality what has happened in the Gujarat and who were responsible for the war and presents the documents only as the representation.

Because of the different discourses present about one issue it creates suspension to the narration of the history. So Branningham argues, “Literature regularly invites us to believe in its narrative or representation of the past. It needs our belief or at the very least, the suspension of our disbelief” (17). The alternate narration of the Gujarat victims show how the state people makes their own story by creating story themselves and proves the state remains as the passive only serve for the Muslims because only Hindus vote for them.

Because of the different truths regarding to the one issue, various provisional answers are made. According to Louis Montrose, new historicism

provides provisional answers to the hidden and secret questions. The documented history tries to hide the reality because of the pressure of the powerful authority. By this it can be said that there is not history but histories. He claims:

We can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question .... and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are constructed as the documents upon which historians ground their own texts. (20)

The narration forms of the story in the fictional forms matches with the official narration but it is narrated alternatively than the official history and narrate it in the fictional forms. The unofficial narration of the history sought to provide justice to the people of Gujarat and has blamed the police and even the state, the statements of survivors, eyewitness and relief workers suggest that state officials and the police connived with the attackers.

As Montrose has said there is no single history but histories, in the novel also regarding to the single incident different stories are made. Through the various statement, it is clear that politics is only for the powerful person, the citizens are deprived from the right of information. As the citizen the writer wants to know the reality of the Gujarat Carnage and to provide justice to the people of Gujarat. The right of information is blocked to the people. Analyzing it, it can be said that the history does not come outside as it is rather it is twisted and broken into different forms. So, there is not real history but histories. It is the responsibility of the readers to know what is real and what is made real by the people in the power as Hayden White narrates, “Every (hi-)story needs a subject whose (hi-)story is being narrated—and in the case of history, the state is the most obvious candidate” (48). Therefore, we

can narrate historical event in potentially in limitless number of ways, as White suggest, “we actually realize only a small set of particular stories about the past” (40). Due to the variations in the history and the literature, the official and unofficial historical events and narrations are susceptible of any number of different telling. On the face of it, this claim seems either so obvious as to be banal as said by Winston Churchill that 'history is written by the victors'.

Concludingly, this research focuses on the representation of the power politics and ideology of the Hindu contemporary ruler during the Godhra carnage and the post carnage in Hariharan's book *Fugitive Histories*. It explores the issues of critical situation of the people in Gujarat where around two thousand people were killed. The marginalized people became refugees in their own state. Regarding to blaze of Godhara train burnt event different stories were made. It shows that the Gujarat government people who were in power create false discourse as truth and want to be in power for a longer period of time. The marginalized people of Gujarat were in traumatic condition because their voice is unheard in official representation and state official people create multiple discourses for a single monolithic story on the basis of their ideology to sustain in power for a longer period of time.

Moreover, Hariharan denaturalizes Mahatma Gandhi and conveys the message that the contemporary leader has been compared with 'The Father of the Nation' to satirize the present contemporary chief minister to show how people work outwardly and inwardly in the history. Beside this, the policeman deployed for the smooth functioning of the state after the Gujarat carnage acted according to the ideology and power politics of the state. This prove that the marginalized issues were unheard, their sentiments were absent and they didn't get justice from the state.

Therefore, the novel is the contemporary discourse narrate by the marginalize people and suffering of the peoples from the state sponsored riots by the Hindus ruler to subjugate the people. Githa Hariharan narrates the stories of Gujarat carnage and presents the subjective form of history parallel to the objective form of history to understand the unhealed wound of sufferers. By offering multiple versions of history in this novel, Hariharan rejects the history constructed by the Powers. By narrating the stories from the alternate perspective of the history with the help of character Sara, the novelist breaks the boundaries between history and fiction and provides a real revision of history thereby problematizing the anecdotal reference of Gandhi at the heart of the novel.

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