Chapter 2:
Surat (The city of Sun): Rise, Fall and Re-rise

Lahore multān aru sārē sindh dēśa dikhe, marubhūmi aan dikhe, mevādi mūrat ko;
Ujjan prayāg aru, kāśī haridvār dikhe, tirthon mein guñje, teri hi noorat ko;
Dakhkhan marāthā aru kachchh saurāshtra dikhe, baḍē guṇagrāhī log, gurjar dhurat ko;
Todar kahat sārē hind mein anuthe dikhe, mugal samrāṭa teri suhānī sūrat ko.

- Todarmal

(I have seen Lahore, Multan, the entire Sindh, and Mewar, the desert's dignity.;
Have seen Ujjain, Prayag, Kashi and Haridwar, all the pilgrims are buzzing with prayers;
Have seen Deccan, Maratha, Kutch and Saurashtra, the people of Gurjar land are appreciative;
Says Todar, oh! Mughal king! Your pleasant Surat is unique in the entire Hind.)

(the researcher's trans.)

Surat is the second-largest city in Gujarat, India's westernmost state. It is situated on the banks of the Tapi River and has a six-kilometre coastline along the Arabian Sea. The city carries its rich history and tradition from the pre-Mughal era to the British, through pre-independence to post-independence expansion. Known for trade and commerce, it also significantly contributed to literature, theatre, trade, and textiles. Textiles and diamonds are the city's main industries, earning it the nicknames "Diamond City" and "Silk City." The city is an example of a pre-modern urban location with significant socio-political and economic shifts and changes. It has no unique significance as a pilgrimage site, nor has it been a capital city or even a historic city, but it has made a significant contribution to the economic expansion of western India. It used to provide refuge and employment opportunities, which attracted Europeans for business. Even today, individuals from all across the country travel to the city for business and jobs. It has evolved into a smart city, with improvements in practically every industry. It is now one of India's fastest-growing cities. The port city has collapsed several times, yet it continues rising and re-rising. It is vital to delve into the city's past to have a deeper grasp of it.

Surat, formerly known as Suryapur, has several accounts of how it gained its current name. Its origins may be traced back to the thirteenth century. In its early stages, there were just two primary communities: fishermen and farmers. The city was captured by Islamic forces in the fourteenth century. It was later conquered by the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1573, and the city was administered by the Mughal Emperors of Delhi until 1733. The subsequent emperors were incapable of ruling, and the situation spiralled out of control. Many Nawabs reigned until the British leveraged the situation. They took over the fort in 1759 and gained total control in 1800.

Surat was India's largest port at the time. It is estimated that it dealt with 84 ports. For almost three centuries, Surat thrived as a trading centre, but the last few years were not kind to Surat. Inflation and tough commercial competitiveness plagued the city. Nature also plotted against the city, causing famine, floods, and fires. As Balkrishna Gokhale asserts, "it began its struggle for eminence during the second half of the sixteenth century, reached the peak of its prosperity in the seventeenth century, and began its slow and convoluted journey into insignificance in the opening decades of the eighteenth century" (7).

2.1 Early History

Surat city has very few historical records before the thirteenth century, but it was part of the Chalukya empire of Gujarat from the 10th to the 13th centuries (Gokhale 8). Surat was ruled by the ruler of Kamarej at the time and comprised only two communities: fishermen and farmers. It is also obvious from the evidence that it was once known as 'Suryapur.' Historians remark that Qutbuddin visited Rander and Surat after 1205, implying that Surat existed at the turn of the thirteenth century. A. B. Renal believes that "it was not bigger than a hamlet till the thirteenth century" (qtd. in E. Patel 5). As a result, the growth of Surat must have begun after the first quarter of the thirteenth century.

2.1.1 The Pre-Mughal Era

Surat was conquered by Islamic rulers led by Mohammad Tughlaq in the fourteenth century. He plundered Surat and appointed a Nawab as ruler. Then, little evidence was available until the sixteenth century. The sixteenth century marked the beginning of the city's growth. Gopi, a prominent trader, became well-known for his wealth and commitment to the city's development. In 1516, he constructed the first artificial lake, 'Gopi Talav,' by laying

stones beneath it. A mansion was constructed in the centre, and people used to visit it by boat. (Later, it was used to divert floodwaters.)

The most significant fluctuations in Surat's fortunes commenced following European engagement, which began in 1512 with the advent of the Portuguese. The city's downfall lay in the fact that those who arrived inflicted harm upon it. In 1512 and 1530, the Portuguese destroyed the city. The city was undoubtedly rich at the period. Barbosa characterises Surat in 1514:

> Going on and passing the Reynel river, on the further bank is the city of Çurate (Surat), inhabited by Moors and situated on the river. Here they deal in many commodities, in which there is much trade. Hither sail ships in great numbers from Malabar and other parts, where they sell what they bring and take back what they want, as this is a great port for traffic, and there are many substantial merchants, as well Moors as Heathen (for they also dwell here). The divan, that is to say the custom-house, brings in yearly a great sum of money to the king of Cambaya. (Dames 148-149)

In 1543, Safi Aaga, also known as Khudavand Khan, a minister of Sultan Mohammad II, erected a fort to safeguard the city. In 1572, it was conquered by Mirzas.

2.1.2 The Mughal Era

The city was integrated into the Mughal Empire following Akbar's conquest in 1573. He designated a fort commander (*Qiledar*) to govern the city while asserting his authority from Delhi. Todarmal, a minister in Akbar's court, assessed the area of Surat's land, which was around 770,985 acres. Until Akbar's death in 1605, Surat saw prosperity across all sectors. Surat supplanted Cambay as the principal commercial hub of the West. The Portuguese were the sole sovereigns of the sea.

Jahangir ascended to the throne following the death of his father, Akbar. The English entered the kingdom for trade for the first time under his reign. During that era, silk, cotton, and woollen textiles were the most favoured commodities. On August 20, 1608, Captain Hawkins navigated near Surat, and the subsequent year, he journeyed to Agra to confer with Jahangir. He obtained authorisation to engage in commerce but encountered numerous challenges in establishing his trade in Surat. The Portuguese, possessing a trade monopoly,

feared competition and so sought to obstruct it. They successfully remained there and constructed a factory that commenced operations in 1612. The Dutch landed in 1616. The French were the last to arrive in Surat in 1667, however their presence was brief.

Following Jahangir's demise in 1627, Shah Jahan ascended to the throne. In addition to Europeans, a multitude of traders, including as Arabs, Jews, Persians, Armenians, Chinese, and Japanese, inhabited the city throughout Shahjahan's rule. Gradually, individuals commenced inhabiting the areas surrounding the fort, which they designated as *Parā*.

In 1658, Aurangzeb ascended to the throne. Hindus endured significant hardship during his administration. He imposed a tax on Hindus and Parsis while consistently favouring Muslims. The emperor was merciless and compelled the Hindus to convert. He exacerbated communal tensions by levying a *jazya* tax on non-Muslims and demolishing temples to construct mosques. He designated Surat as the "Gateway to Macca." A further drawback was Shivaji's incursion, which consistently plundered the city from 1664 until 1675. Numerous residents unable to endure the concurrent strikes relocated to Mumbai. The British relocated their headquarters to Mumbai due to their fatigue with trade impediments. This initiated the initial phase of the city's decline.

An account of the city's infrastructure advancement is equally significant. In addition to the little gardens established by the British, one was named 'Begamvadi.' Three unique home types existed for the three classes. Several opulent and costly brick and lime palaces were owned by affluent Muslims, Hindus, Jains, and Parsis. Bricks were expensive for the middle class and artisans; hence most residences were built from wood and bamboo sourced from Daman. Modest cottages formerly served as residences for numerous Hindus. During his tour to Surat, John Fryer observed a diverse array of structures, which he characterised as follows:

> The Town has very many noble lofty Houses of the *Moor*-Merchants, flat at top, and Terassed with Plaster. There is a *Parsy*, Broker to the King of *Bantam*, has turned the outside of his Pockets on a sumptuous House, a spacious Fabrick, but ill contrived, as are many of the Banians. They, for the most part, affect not stately Buildings, living in humble Cells or Sheds. Glass is dear, and scarcely purchasable (unless by way of *Stambole*, or *Constantinople* from the Venetians, from whom they have some Panes of Painted Glass in Sassi Windows) therefore their Windows, except some few of the

highest Note, are usually folding Doors, skreened with Cheeks, or Latises, Carved in Wood, or Ising-glass, or more commonly Oister-shells. (Fryer 92)

Fryer highlights the unsanitary, malodorous streets, noting a lack of sanitation. In 1684, the city experienced a two-year epidemic that caused the deaths of thousands. The population reached approximately 200,000 by the conclusion of the 17th century. An administration and oversight organisation was necessary for a large city. A governor overseeing 1500 subordinates was designated for that purpose. There were 29 departments, encompassing the military services, judicial, revenue department, commerce, and public works. The *Shah Bandar* (Port Master) oversaw the revenue division, a *Kazi* (Judge) was designated to administer justice, and a *Waqianavis* was nominated to oversee the office. *Kotwal* was designated to supervise urban crime, while the *Faujdar* (military commander) supervised the city's outside. Kotwal patrolled from nine at night to three in the morning (E. Patel 47).

Trade was widespread during this period. No vessel in the Indian Ocean was devoid of cargo from Surat port (E. Patel 52). The dealers were affluent, possessing lakhs of rupees. They resided in a modest dwelling and dressed inconspicuously due to their fear of theft. Women seldom ventured out individually; they typically congregated in groups. The city was consistently lively and affluent. The first impression of any visitor was that of "a 'fair' city, bustling with industries and commerce, prosperous with its people apparently happy in making money" (qtd. in Gokhale 10).

The era experienced both a life of indulgence and periods of deprivation. The famine of 1631-32 was the most devastating. Numerous stories have detailed tragic narratives of the catastrophe. Over the past three years, there has been a significant deficiency in precipitation. Impoverished individuals forsook their residences to procure sustenance; men and women trafficked their offspring; parents departed, abandoning their children; and entire families perished without someone to dispose of their remains. In 1659, riots occurred between Hindus and Muslims. It "became a garrison more than a town of trade" (qtd. in Gokhale 57).

Aurangzeb passed away in 1707, and his successors lacked the authority to maintain control over the empire; hence, numerous nawabs succeeded each other. The Nawabs often conflicted with the English and the Marathas. Moreover, they were not endorsed by local vendors. Consequently, the English launched an assault, resulting in a confrontation for the

fort between the English and the Nawab. The English seized control of the fort in 1759, and the Nawab and the English jointly governed until 1800. Over the span of forty years, citizens encountered several socio-political upheavals and natural disasters.

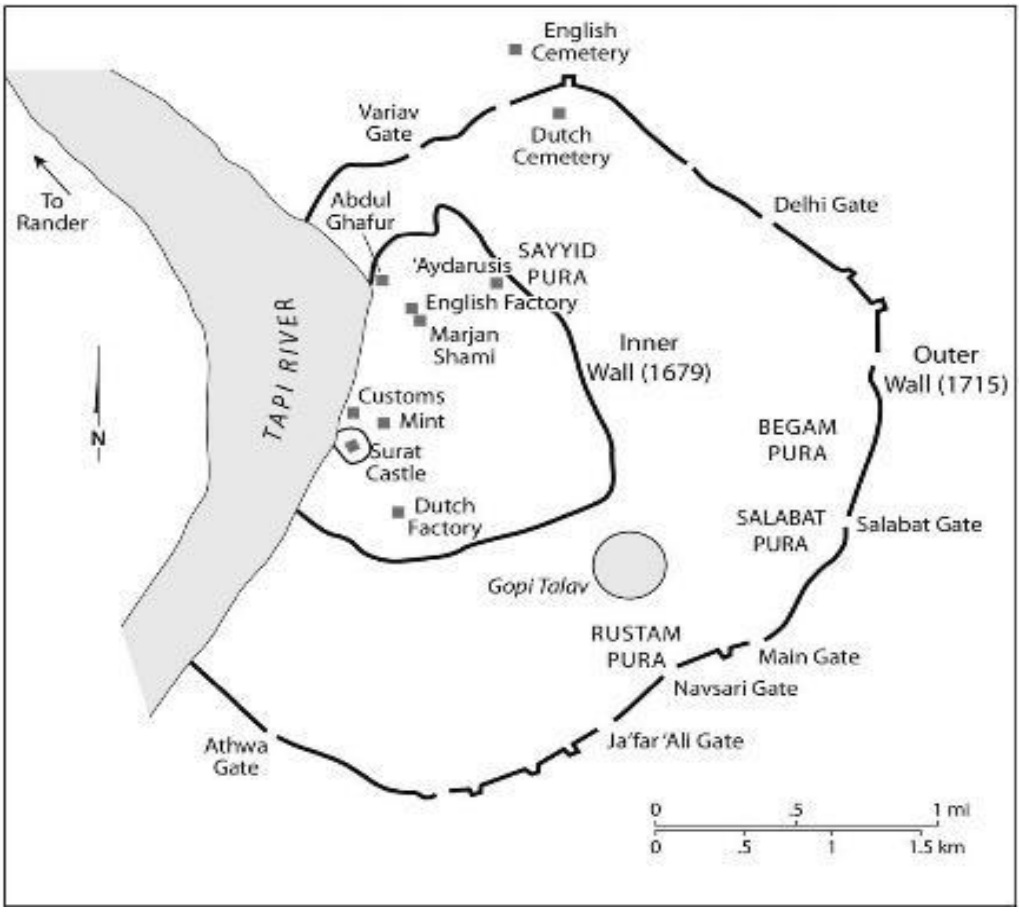

Fig. 2.1: Map of Surat in 1720.

2.1.3 During British Empire

The population reached eight lakhs at the end of the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, Surat was completely under British control. Over the century, it experienced substantial growth, provoking diverse responses from its residents. The general public consistently condemned the government's measures in 1860, as they implemented income tax, license tax, and salt tax.

The municipality was established in 1852 with the responsibility of street sanitation and illumination. In 1853, they endeavoured to construct streetlights but were thwarted by water. It also initiated suitable planning and measures for the city's expansion. The roads were expanded, and meat markets were established separately. It allocated a specific zone for

abattoirs. They also encouraged individuals to construct toilets and refrain from public defecation. In response to the cholera outbreak in 1818, the government established a hospital in 1823. In subsequent decades, its responsibilities encompassed the implementation of a drainage system, sanitation, construction of roads and bridges, and provision of water supplies.

At that time, there were no public schools. Individuals traditionally received their education from private institutions or personal instructors. Attending an English institution for higher education was unfeasible, rendering Mumbai the sole option. In 1826, the government founded two Gujarati schools and an English school in 1842. The first girls' school was founded in 1890. Andrews Library was established as the first library in 1850. In 1863, the city established a gymnasium and subsequently the 'Parekh Hunnar Shala' to enhance skills such as carpentry, blacksmithing, and fitting. The railway service connecting Surat and Mumbai began in 1864. Jafarali Khan established the first enterprise in 1866, designated as "Jafarali Spinning and Weaving Enterprise." In 1886, three manufacturers employed machinery to spin cotton and produce garments.

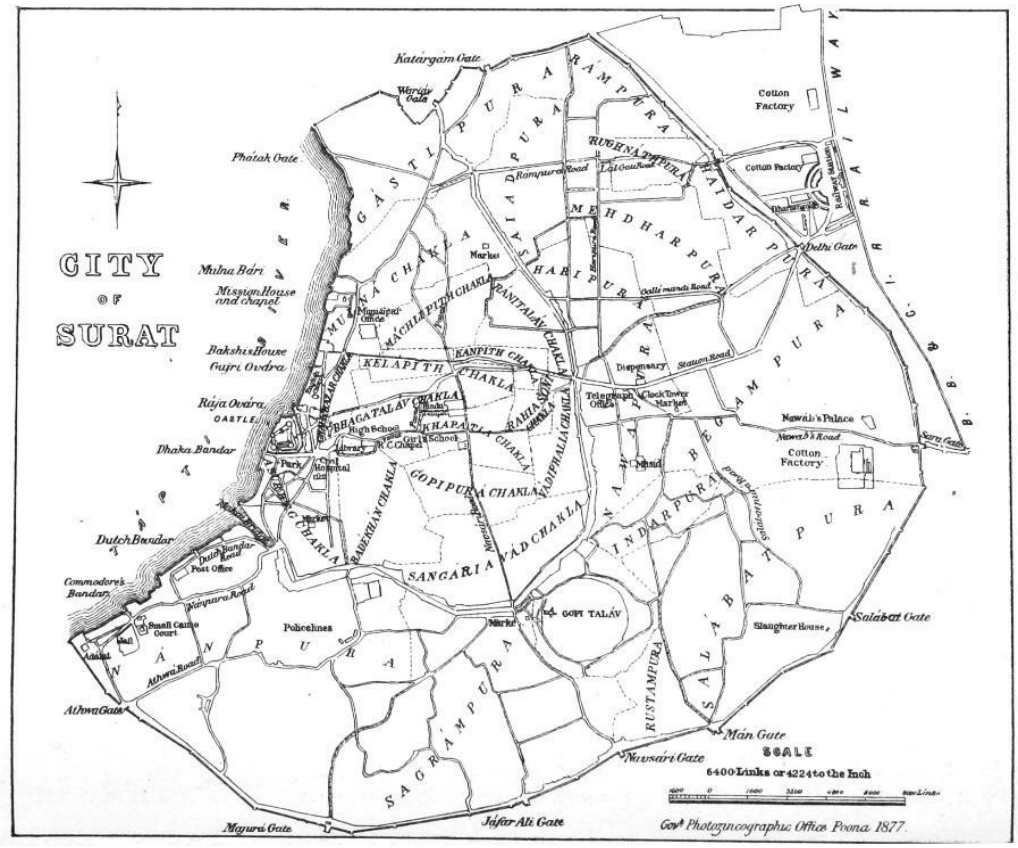

Fig. 2.2: Surat in 1877

By the 1880s, the city was nearly equipped with all necessary amenities. The population has now exceeded one million. The city was divided into two sections: an inner core and an outside area referred to as *Parā*. The residences in the inner section were arranged in a zigzag pattern, whilst those in the outer section were designed with wide thoroughfares. Some residences featured backyards, but others included basements. Certain residences possess apertures in their walls through which intruders may be incapacitated by arrows or firearms. The residences were formerly built from mats, wood, and bamboo. Nevertheless, bricks and stones became increasingly pragmatic over time.

Despite these advancements, Surat's overall condition continued to decline. Haynes says:

> During the nineteenth century fires and floods had struck the city time and time again, leaving some parts uninhabited for decades. With the building of railways and the silting up of the Tapi River, which flows through the city to the Arabian Sea only a few miles away, the trade of Surat's harbour had largely disappeared. Thousands of residents, both wealthy and poor, had left for the blooming commercial-industrial-administrative centre of Bombay. (33)

The city had rapid development during the British ascendance, although also encountered a subsequent period of decline. Surat had a succession of natural calamities, including famine, floods, and fire. Famines in 1804 and 1813, together with floods in 1810, 1822, and 1835, were devastating. The 1837 fire was the most catastrophic, destroying over 7,000 residences. Alterations in commercial dynamics, domestic politics, and insecurity compelled traders to relocate from Surat.

Moreover, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, urban expansion emerged as a novel avenue for colonists to attain economic advantages. Expenditures on administration and the military impose a burden on the budget. The government acknowledged the incapacity of the Indian peasantry to bear that responsibility, leading to the proposal of Indian towns as an alternative solution. The functions of cities have evolved progressively:

> Urban places were no longer just headquarters for revenue developments or staging points in the export of agricultural produce; rather, they were to become a significant part of the taxation structure and critical centres for launching India's development. Officials began to consider the application of Victorian notion of civic improvement

> to Indian towns. They urged the adaptation of land surveys and bylaws to control unsanitary practices and to regulate the use of Urban space. They formulated plans to improve urban health, the flow of commerce, police services, and education. They thought of providing cities with roads and bridges, public parks and water fountains, clock towers and drainage systems, libraries and schools. All these schemes cost money, and Raj was unwilling to strain its own budget further, it now sought funding from local sources. In most Indian cities, municipalities were established to develop civic services and to tax the citizenry. (Haynes 111-112)

Nevertheless, locals showed a lack of interest in these services, resulting in minimal acceptance. Land legislation, delineating private and public territories, the destruction of sacred sites for construction, and the intrusion of marginalised sweepers into residences for sanitation posed a significant threat to commerce and cultural heritage. The implementation of an income tax in 1860, a licence tax in 1878, a cesspool tax in the 1870s, and a house tax and water rate in the 1890s incited riots and strikes within the local population. Ongoing conflicts between the administration and the populace resulted in political and economic instability. Instability prevailed not just between colonisers and the colonised but also among local leaders.

Haynes contends that the city has not experienced a physical transformation. It remains the same from three centuries prior: congested and filthy (33). In colonial Surat, the indigenous social and political culture experienced substantial alterations. Surat's urban society was bifurcated into two segments: the core and the periphery, or parā. The central region was inhabited by affluent Hindus and Jains. They constituted one-fourth of the population. The *parās* primarily comprise middle and lower-class artisans and small merchants, including *Darji* (tailors), *Suthar* (carpenters), *Khatri* (weavers), and *Kanbi*. The city's inner wall functioned as a societal divide until the 1860s, when it was demolished for health reasons. Prominent individuals affected both colonisers and native inhabitants. The city's esteemed families exerted influence over others. They were able to cultivate their identity through participation in the municipality.

Affluent individuals contributed to education, healthcare, public parks, and funding for flood and plague relief. They received recognition from the community and government through philanthropic efforts. Their office was passed on to their heirs upon their demise. This system remained operational until 1883, when the authority instituted elections in Surat.

The new approach allowed anyone educated in English to gain entry to the municipality. Until the onset of the twentieth century, notables were perceived as community leaders. Haynes observed that by 1914, “notables no longer control the key mediating roles in the city” (145). The majority of key positions in the municipality were occupied by educated professionals, including doctors and lawyers. The rise of the educated elite undermined the authority of the notables. To preserve their status, many endeavoured to present themselves as leaders of a minority threatened by the Hindu majority.

In colonial Surat, reform was not restricted to the material or physical shifts carried out primarily by technology and industry; another revolutionary development was a shift in consciousness. An individual’s awareness of colonial oppression and resistance to the government binds him to collective power, breaking through caste and religious barriers. With colonial efforts to draw indigenous men into leadership and the emergence of the English-educated class, the native population’s socio-political engagement extended to the public sphere. Increasing educational opportunities in the elite class encompassed both nationalist and democratic objectives. This English-educated elite class assumed organisational leadership and guided the country through “the decolonisation process, giving shape to its constitution, and setting the general contours for state ideology” (Haynes 4). Educated professions boosted the metropolitan economy and drew men to jobs in the railway, administration, post office, and court.

Prior to the late nineteenth century, English education was limited to a few wealthy families who could afford a private tutor. Others got possibilities with the establishment of schools in the 1840s. They attended colleges in Bombay for their higher education. English education exposed them to British theories. Haynes argues that English education lauded British practices while criticising Indian customs and ideologies, causing young men to transform society. When they returned to Surat, these men were heavily impressed by British culture and believed that Indians should follow England’s path to development. They rise to positions of power in the government. They were shown not as leaders of any caste or religion, but as citizens of the entire city. Educated officers worked in the government, and educated people who were not in the government helped to build educational organisations.

The First World War was yet another major crisis. Locals were terrified as a result of international wars. Surat was an international commerce centre; hence the consequences of the war were unavoidable. Banks went into bankruptcy, mills went into liquidation, and the

cost of precious metals and other everyday items increased, making it more difficult for small dealers and artists to make ends meet. Furthermore, the government raised the income tax during the war years.

On one hand, the post-war world was utterly ravaged. Conversely, India was making strides towards independence. During this time, Gandhi emerged as a new and prominent character in the Indian freedom fight. After 1919, men and women were greatly influenced by Gandhian ideology and advocated a novel language for politics (Haynes 203). Gandhi's perspective on the spiritual benefits of religious practice and political efforts based on truth and nonviolence caused a profound shift among leading freedom fighters. He opposed to settlers' introduction of modern amenities. Along with the freedom struggle, he attempted to promote peace and unity among citizens, since India faced internal enmity in the form of communalism. It is pertinent to note that "during the entire colonial period between 1800 and World War I, there had never been a major incident of communal strife between Hindus and Muslims" (Haynes 261). But after the 1920s, this religious identity came to the core, culminating in riots.

Surat persisted as a hub for those engaged in the struggle for independence. Numerous prominent individuals, such as Gandhi, Tilak, Sardar Patel, and Nehru, frequently graced the city of Surat with their presence. It has also been instrumental in the Bardoli Satyagraha and the Dandi March. On August 15th, 1947, India attained its independence, and the city of Surat joined the nation in commemorating this significant event. Participants proceeded from Rander and various nearby areas to the Chowk situated outside the fort, where the tricolour flag was hoisted precisely as the clock signalled midnight.

2.1.4 Post-Independence Era

Gaining independence, the nation focused on fundamental necessities. Surat, like the rest of the country, was free to determine its own fate. The city pushed on with fundamental infrastructural and institutional necessities. The New Railway Station was built in 1952 to improve transportation. The National Institute of Technology, named after Sardar Patel, was established to meet educational demands for technical education. After a few years, in 1964, a medical college was founded. Later, in 1965, South Gujarat University was established, which provided better educational possibilities.

Natural disasters remained a serious constraint even in post-independence Surat. The devastation inflicted by the floods of 1968 and 1970 forced the administration to reconsider. To safeguard the city from flooding, a dam was built near Ukai village in 1972. “There were no big floods in Surat or other downstream areas for the first 20 years (1972–93) after the building of the Ukai dam” (Mavalankar and Srivastava 6). Floods hit twice in the last decade, in 1994 and 1998. The flood of 1994 was followed by a plague that devastated the city in that same year.

2.1.5 The Twenty-first Century

The twenty-first century brought with it the prospect of socio-political and commercial growth. Surat began to build its infrastructure. Many flyover bridges were built, as well as a sports complex and swimming pools. In 2007, the City Bus service was also launched. Today, the city is spreading like a concrete jungle, with more and more flyovers and skyscrapers being built all over the place. A major flood in 2006 devastated the city, bringing human tragedy and material devastation.

Despite disasters, the city never stopped developing and keeping up with the rest of the world. The city has a population of 44,66,826 people (as of Census 2011) and a land area of 461.60 square kilometres. It created an identity on the industrial map of the country. Surat’s economy is built on textiles, diamond cutting and polishing, *zari* handicrafts, and other industries. The city accounts for 42 % of the world's and 70 % of the nation’s total raw diamond cutting and polishing, as well as 40 % of the nation’s total man-made fabric manufacturing (“Contribution”). According to the Global Economic Research Study, Surat will be the world’s fastest-growing city between 2019 and 2035. (“Surat”). The city is also ranked as one of the cleanest in India. The city is still working hard to reclaim the prominence it once had.

Although expanding urban facilities are beneficial to inhabitants, the other side of the coin should not be overlooked. New possibilities enhance income and raise living standards, increasing demand for new facilities. People from rural regions migrate for work and to find permanent housing. Surat Municipal Corporation had a population of 1,19,306 people in 1901. It grew to 2,23,182 after independence in 1951. It reached 24,33,835 at the turn of the century, in 2001, and now, after the limit has been raised, the city’s total population is

46,45,384. A city must develop vertically as well as horizontally to accommodate its residents, leaving no or very few open spaces.

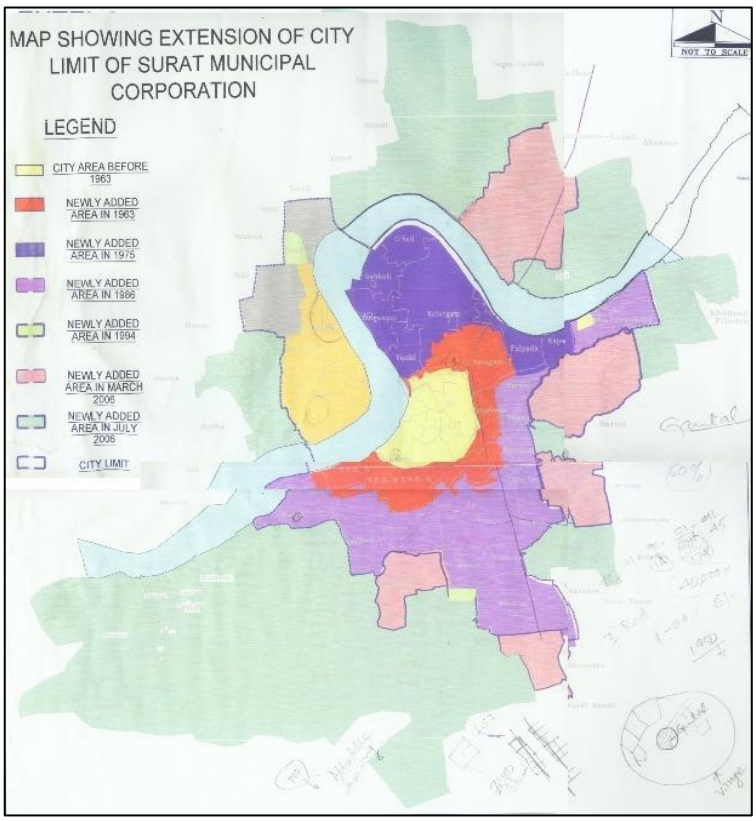

Fig. 2.3: Map of Surat and its extensions post-1960.

Surat's boundaries are also expanding to meet the need for residential and commercial sectors. This horizontal sprawl is not always planned. The expansion ratio is increasing from decade to decade. In 1963, the city borders were expanded by 21.93 square kilometres, which rose to 14.87 times by 2006, and the area was 326.11 square kilometres. A major expansion could be seen between 1994 and 2006, which is from 112 sq. km. to 326 sq. km. (Savani and Bhatt 509). After the city limit was extended in 2020, the total area of the city is now 462.14 square kilometres. Savani and Bhatt identified several factors that contribute to urban expansion, including population growth, industrialization, increased demand for living space, a lack of good planning, transportation, and so on (509).

In the case of Surat, it has become denser within the last few decades. The residential buildings grew with "a major lack of neighbourhood-level shared open space" (Jariwala and Bhagat 5494). According to Jariwala and Bhagat's assessment, the city has numerous schools, hospitals, and marketplaces, but the physical infrastructure is insufficient to cater to

the population. They listed the surveying concerns as follows: traffic, small and clogged streets, encroachment, little room for pedestrians, and so forth (5496). One of the consequences that came out of such a lack of open space is people's disinterest in parks and gardens. According to a survey by Parmar and Kania, individuals prefer to spend their leisure time on roadside pathways (1148).

2.2 Surat in Literature (Poetry)

Surat's history has never been restricted to trade and business; it has also remained a literary hotspot. It produced or inspired several literary luminaries in literature who are still considered to be highly respected by literary scholars. It begins with Wali Gujarati, who once visited Surat and witnessed it with his own eyes, and continues to the present writers and poets who were born, grew up, and felt it with their hearts. The most popular are Narmad and Dalpatram, who are considered the forefathers of modern Gujarati literature.

Going back in time, various works were written in Surat. Madhavdas Sundardas composed *Adi Parva* and *pada* on *Dashamskandh* in 1619. Manbhatt Hariram penned *Babhruvahan Aakhyan* and *Sita Swayamvar*. In 1650, Gopaldas composed *Gopalgeeta* and *Buddhivahu ni Shikhaman*. Other seventeenth-century personalities include poet Premanand, and Laghu and Sukh, who composed the story *Vinaychatt* in 1667. A *shayar* named Rajaram lived during Wali's time, but his *shers* are no longer available. Ervad Rustam Peshotan, the first Parsi poet, composed *Zarthrostranama* in 1676 and *Shyavakshnama* in 1680. Vijayvinaygani Upadhyay authored the Sanskrit poem *Induduta* in 1682. Sheikh Bakshumiyan wrote *Hadik E Ahmadi* while his son Shukhumiyan wrote *Gujdast E Sulhae Surat* in 1897. He also wrote *Tarikhe Surat*.

Surat remained a hub of the literary revolution in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Narmad was the first to write prose and an autobiography. The first Gujarati drama was written by Dalpatram, whereas the first Gujarati novel was by Nandshankar Mehta. Since then, the city has produced many poets and writers whose works are unique. Poets like Gani Dahiwala, Mareez, Asim Randeri, and Bhagwatikumar Sharma are among them.

A poet possesses the ability to explore any theme, yet the essence of his homeland remains an indelible influence in his work. Writers and poets endeavour to articulate the essence of the locales or nations that shaped their formative years. For centuries, Surat has

served as a profound subject for numerous poets. The city continues to be a prosperous region, a hub of commerce, and a site of natural calamities, providing abundant material for poets to explore its historical and contemporary narratives. Nonetheless, the thematic elements, structural composition, modes of presentation, and intentions behind the creation of poetry concerning Surat have evolved over time.

Todarmal, a minister of Akbar, visited Surat in the sixteenth century and was impressed by its beauty. He concedes to having visited Lahore, Multan, Sindh, and Mewar. He had also visited pilgrims such as Ujjain, Kashi, and Haridwar, as well as Deccan, Maratha, and Kutch, but the people of Gurjar land (Gujarat) are grateful, and Surat appears to be unique in the world.

In the seventeenth century, Wali Mohammad Wali (1667-1707), commonly known as Wali Gujarati, composed an Urdu poem called "Masnavi Dar Tarife Shahare Surat" that describes Surat's beauty and its people. He believes Surat is a wonderful place and the centre of the world. He paints several pictures of its beauty. He was astonished by the beauty of the Tapi River, comparing its water to nectar and its breeze to Kashmir. He looks absolutely fascinated by the beauty of *Surti* women and uses a variety of metaphors to describe their lovely hair, cheeks, and lips. Despite their beautiful looks, no woman covers her face. Whoever visits Surat can be relieved from sorrow. He writes:

Rahe mashahur uskā nām surat,
Ke jāve jiske dekhe sab kudurat. (I. Desai 89)

In the nineteenth century, Navalram Pandya (1836-1888), a well-known social reformer and Gujarati critic, wrote a song, "Gujarat ni Musafari" (Travel to Gujarat), which describes various regions of Gujarat. He also mentions Surat and praises its stunning scenery and roads. People here are lovely and extraordinary, and they value sanitation. He mentions the shops of *barfi* and *papadi*, which they receive by luck, and the Surat's meal that is special. Women wear silk sarees here. He wonders, if everyone seems to be busy attending fairs, processions, and dances, what work do people do?

Narmadashankar Dave 'Narmad' (1833-1886) also wrote about the city's plight in his poem "Surat"- "*Aa te sha tuj haal, Surat sonani murat! / Thaya pura behal, Surat tuj radati surat.*" Surat was once a golden city, but now it is in mourning, and its gorgeous face has

turned ugly like an owl's. Narmad also wrote about the city's affluence and bustling trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, internal and external political intrigues eventually led to the city's downfall. He also recounts how it was invaded and devastated by natural calamities. He compares Surat to a woman and praises her perseverance even after the attacks. The poet depicts a contrasting picture of Surat's past and present, with the hope of its re-emergence. The poem ends with a message to all *Surti* that this is their last chance to reclaim their prosperity through unity.

Behramji Malabari (1853-1912) provides a socio-historical overview of Surat in the poem "Surati Lala Sahelani." The poem is about the city's downfall—not just economic collapse, but also social and moral degradation. It sank into moral depravity after being invaded by other civilizations. People wasted their inherited money on occasional celebrations and festivals. When they had lost everything, they began stealing. How can people be safeguarded if guards engage in these activities? Greed for money draws many individuals to superstition.

Apart from the poetry mentioned above, several poets wrote about major historical events in Surat. Shayar Harilal penned a poem in 1863 about Surat during the historical insurrection of 1857. It was a period when the entire country was set to rebel, and Surat was no exception. The author begins the poem with a summary of current events in different parts of the country. He goes on to discuss the scenario in Surat. A troop of shoulders attacked and plundered the city. Many individuals fled with their savings, while some were caught and robbed on the way out. Shoulders turned on women, assaulting them physically like worms sucking blood. Finally, he discusses his personal experience of being imprisoned and how he managed to write about it in the form of a poem. He also indicates the date he finished the poem.

Similarly, Shayar Bansilal (1821-1877) recounts the event of Shivaji's plunder of Surat through the medium of poetry. The genesis of events can be traced back to the discord between the Marathas and the Mughals. The Marathas appropriated the wealth of the Mughals along with the city itself. Nevertheless, the poet asserts that they provided aid to impoverished Brahmins, a statement that seems to conflict with established historical facts. Surat was besieged on 17 occasions, resulting in the appropriation of a significant portion of its wealth during each invasion. The poet posits that Aurangzeb bears responsibility for Surat's present condition, as the Mughals consistently retreated to preserve their own safety.

Lalitashankar Vyas emphasises Lokmanya Tilak's visit to Surat during a Congress session in 1907. In his poem, he praises Tilak's efforts and achievements. Similarly, Dhirajram Vaidya wrote a collection of poems about the arrival of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajapatray, and other leaders in the session. He applauds their presence and Congress's efforts in the independence movement. In one poem, he talks about a session using the days of a lunar calendar from day 1 to day 15. He also reports about the canopy and the seating arrangements for the session.

In his poem "Utaran" (1933), Kalidas Shelat commemorates Surat's kite festival. He invites kite enthusiasts and refers to them as '*veer'* (brave person). The poem describes the activities that individuals engage in when flying kites. Just like festivals, Surat is famous for its food items. *Ghari* is a Surat speciality that is well-known all over the world. How could a poet avoid writing about it? Baldev Moliya penned a poem on *ghari* – "Rasiyo ghari no" (Lover of Ghari). The poet describes the delicious as well as his response when he sees it. He urges God to provide him with *ghari* on special occasions.

Surat is glorified in Gokuldas Raychura's poem "Surat: Maharani Nagaro Tani" (Surat: Queen of Cities) (1934). Surat, according to the poet, is a centre of art where every house is bustling with *sur* and *raga*. People enjoy art, as well as poetry and literature. People are hearty eaters and live life to the fullest. He describes India as productive land, Gujarat as its garden, and Surat as a sunflower that aromatized the nation. It has a glorious history and a bright future. In "Ashabhari Surat" (Hopeful Surat) (1939), Deshalji Parmar also praises Surat. The city is imprinted on his mind. The auspicious time is full of vibrant colours, and Surat will appear stunning. Finally, he prays for Surat to always have a smile on its face and that it remains the golden idol (*Surat Sonani Murat*), as it was.

Kalyanji V. Mehta (1890–1973), a prominent freedom fighter from Surat, celebrates the city in the poem "Janmabhoomi Surat nu Divya Darshan." He provides views of Surat city while admiring its contributors and the activities they do. He commemorates the city's history and transformation by listing the names of notable citizens. He also urged in the conclusion to control one's tongue; "eat to live, not live to eat."

At times, a poet employs a tone of irony, as exemplified by Jayant Pathak (1920–2003) in "Surat ni Balihari." The poem illustrates the city at the onset of modernisation. Individuals have begun living in the modern age. Women adorn themselves with lipstick and

don Punjabi dresses, yet they preserve a modesty by covering their bodies that extends to their heels. It presents a paradox that the drain is as expansive as a canal where individuals peddle expensive perfumes. Individuals are drawn to parks, particularly to indulge in *Bhusu* (snack made from puffed rice). Despite the constricted thoroughfares, the capacity for compassion and warmth within them is vast. They possess the ability to provide solace amidst sorrow.

The dialect of Surat, much like its historical narrative, possesses a unique character. "Sacho Surti" (1943), a work of dialogue poetry by Bhimbhai Desai, serves as a satirical commentary on the use of derogatory language within dialects. A discussion is taking place between a landlord and a tenant. The landlord declines to lease his property to a Surti due to their offensive manner of speaking. The tenant endeavours to rationalise his position by asserting that we differ from them. Conversely, Gani Dahiwala (1908-1987) expresses his admiration for them in "Surat no Sahelani." They exhibit a profound commitment and are prepared to endure sacrifices. They possess a distinctive style, characterised by modest lifestyles yet enriched spirits; slender physiques accompanied by astute intellects. He persists:

Shuddh ahimsak khamir enu,
Māykāngalu sharir enu,
Buddhi kintu sauthi shāni,
Joyo surat no sahelāni. (I. Desai 11)

In addition to Gujarati, one can find many Hindi poems that explore the theme of Surat. Rehmat Khan finds contentment in Surat and is reluctant to return to Delhi, as it brings him distress. "*Surat noorani dekh ke, lage paravar se nein / ab yaha se kaise chalu, Delhi bade dukh den,*" he writes. Kavi Dularam laments contemporary Surat in "Surat nu Noor," recalling the Mughal Empire when Surat was famed for its trade, with 84 ports and a gateway to Mecca. But now it has lost its lustre. Fakaruddin also writes about Surat's fall. The essence of Surat has dissipated. Individuals found themselves devoid of sustenance, adequate housing, and even opportunities for gainful employment. Even in the face of the city's downfall, the individuals remain true soldiers. Dasbahadur Vaivala composed a poem that enumerates the saints, poets, and philanthropists of Surat. He seeks to observe various temples along the banks of the Tapi. The precise tally of saints it has generated remains uncertain.

2.2.1 Poems on Disasters in Surat

Surat has endured a series of calamities, including floods, fires, famine, and plague, resulting in significant turmoil within the city. It has made a lasting impact on history, shaping every sector, including the socio-economic realm. Nevertheless, poets crafted verses that encapsulated the calamities, illustrating the profound destruction they inflicted. Nonetheless, it is important to note that not all the poems emerged in the immediate aftermath of the disasters; a number were released years subsequent to those events. An anonymous poem regarding the fire of 1837 was published in 1923. The poem is crafted using a blend of Hindi and Gujarati languages. The poem articulates the profound destruction caused by the fire. The conflagration obliterated all in its path, leaving naught but remnants and scarcely allowing for any escape. It has influenced every community, belief system, demographic, and species. Individuals departed, abandoning their valuable belongings. Ultimately, the poet alludes to the date of the calamitous event. He draws a parallel between the blaze and the Fire of Lanka, which was set ablaze by Hanuman.

In 1889, Bapalal I. Vyas wrote *Surat ni moti aag nu tofan*, a collection of poetry. He gives a thorough account of what happened during the fire. The fire began in a shop in *Bhagol* and quickly spread to other areas. The poem also gives a list of Mumbai residents and locals who assisted in the calamity. He writes:

Commissioner sāheb kehvāy re, – *raj*
Base āpyā lāvi dayāy re, – *raj*
Meer Gulambaba Khanbahadur re, – *raj*
Base lakhi āpyā hajur re, – *raj*
So āpyā Saiyad jun re, – *raj*
Polish superintend re, – *raj* (26)

Kripaskankar Vyas has written several poems about fire and flood. One of his collections is *Jwalamukhi no Japato,* which is a compilation of poetry about the fire. In one poem, he discusses the 1889 fire, giving a thorough account of how the fire spread and who was harmed by it. The authorities and several local leaders initiated a rescue mission. He goes on to describe the efforts of various leaders who come up with suggestions and help to control the flames. In another poem about the same incident, he describes fire spreading from one area to another, causing devastation and turning the city into a forest.

Vyas also wrote about floods in *Jagarel no Japato*. Floods have ruined the city more than any other natural calamity. The flood of 1883 was a terrible disaster. In a poem, the author describes the damage caused by the flood, which destroyed homes, gardens, and bridges. The water dragged people from some parts. Finally, he exhorts people to be mindful and refrain from wrong behaviour. In another poem, he again mentions the flood and claims that the river had exacted its punishment. The river lingered in the city for three days and nights. Many people stayed awake at night and prayed. The poet closes the poem with the hope that believing in Mumbai will assist them. In "Surat no sar gayo," he explores post-flood Surat. The poem provides a list of traders who suffered significant losses in the flood. They gathered funds from Mumbai and helped people who had lost their homes. Many of his poems specifically mention Mumbai's help to the city. The poem provides a list of persons who donated to the relief fund. Another poem describes three people who came to Surat and assisted the people; they donated food, clothes, and money to build houses for Brahmins and *Kanbis*; food and one anna to the fishermen and Muslims of Nanpura. They stayed for ten days and visited various areas of the city to distribute as required.

Vallabhram Ichchharam also wrote a long poem, "Surat ni Jagarel" (The Great Flood in Surat), about the flood of 1883. The poem offers a detailed account of the flood and its consequences. Beginning with an invocation, the poem discusses the appearance of the flood, the disaster caused by it, destruction in the city, loss in the villages on the banks of the river Tapi, rescue operations, fund collection in Mumbai, funds raised in Surat and Ahmedabad, and the committee tasked with putting the funds to use. The poet paints a picture of a flood with a precise description of the locations impacted, the number of houses that fell, and the amount of money each one lost. The authorities stepped in to assist and rescue flood victims. People convened in Mumbai to raise relief contributions, which were then joined by other areas such as Ahmedabad, Bharuch, Junagadh, and many more. Nagindas Manchharam also wrote a collection of poems about the same flood. He too shares details about how water gets to different areas of the city, the communities it affects, and contributions from Mumbai. Not only did people in Surat write about the flood, but so did those in neighbouring places like Jatashankar Mehta penned a poem about the Surat flood in Ahmedabad.

In 1894, Surat experienced a significant flood. Ranchhod F. M. depicts the flood and the profound destruction it caused, through a poem. Individuals experienced the profound loss of their residences alongside the severance of connections with their loved ones. The

water flooded the market, destroying stalls of bananas, *ganthiya*, and wine; nevertheless, a few individuals salvaged their inventory using boats.

Plague pandemic of 1896–97 wreaked havoc on the city. Bhuri Ben wrote *Surat ni Marki na tras no garbo* (Song on the Horror of Surat's Plague) in 1899. The poet personifies the epidemic as a female '*Marki ben*' who was delivered by three mice and travelled to Mumbai, where she made such a mess that there was no wood for cremation. Surat was also hit by the disease. People were forced to reside outside the city under a canopy. Patients were quarantined for ten days, and a fund was raised to feed them. People were screened at the station, but only the poor were quarantined because the wealthy would leave by giving money.

Another tragic incident was the Boat Tragedy of 1938, which inspired poets to write. On August 12, 1938, the city was celebrating Rakshabandhan when a horrific catastrophe happened, drowning more than 80 people. Poets composed several poems commemorating the tragic occurrence. Jyotsana Shukla penned "Mrutyudoot ne" (To the Death Angel) and asked them why they killed people. She continues wondering why they spread the death net and on whose orders they did so without any previous warning or information. In his poem "Surat na chhaiya" (Children of Surat), Vishnuprasad Trivedi asks for aid to rescue them. Death is laughing at them, and no one is there to save them. The tides are really high, and the wind is howling. They eventually sink, delivering a final salute. In "Tarikhe tabahi e kishti," an Urdu poem, Muhamad Naramavala laments the disaster. He chastises the river Tapi for devouring them and calls it a sinful deed. But, in the end, he realised that it was fate and that no one could change it.

The poems that have been chosen so far are traditional Gujarati poetry with metre and rhyme. Many of the poems are written in the *Garbo/Garbi* (song-like) style that was prevalent in mediaeval Gujarati literature. Poems about Surat's history and disasters created in the 19th and 20th centuries are written as historical reports that include information about the events, dates, and consequences in chronological order. A poem about a flood, for example, provides precise information about the flood's date, destruction, rescue effort, names of people who aided or provided funds, and so forth.

Poems published in the nineteenth century are either on the history of the city or the poet's subjective approach to the city's collapse or decline. Poets recall the glorious past and

criticise its present condition. They also give some advice to their fellow residents. Poems composed in the twentieth century are about celebrating the metropolis. It is depicted as the best setting to live in. However, towards the end of the century, poets also condemned its transformation.

Poets from the twenty-first century also celebrate the city. Nayan Desai beautifully describes the rain in "Surat no varsad" (Rain of Surat). Raindrops on the shades, making noise, but severe rain breaks roof tiles, giving the impression that clouds shoot water arrows. The roads are desolate, and Shivaji appears to be plundering the city. "Surat man Popat bole" (Parrot sings in Surat) is another poetry that is an artistic interpretation of nature. Abhishek Desai depicts Surat residents celebrating the Ganpati festival in the poem "Ganeshchaturthi" (2007). According to him, Ganesh Chaturthi is meant to bring joy into people's lives. People celebrate the arrival of a Ganesh idol with songs and dance. In 2007, Bhagwatikumar Sharma wrote a poem "Dubya" (Drown) about libraries that were flooded in 2006. He artistically describes the books that drown and says its lines, paragraphs, words, titles, characters of novels and meters drowned in the flood. He listed down the things in the library that drowned in water: clock, painting, and sparrows behind the frame. Other poets like Pragna Vashi, Dr. Mukul Choksi, Manaharlal Choksi and Sandhya Bhatt have also written poems on Surat.

2.3 Surat in Ghazals

Though free verse is the preferred form of contemporary poets, ghazals have been a prominent and popular genre of poetry for several decades. Due to Surat's production of countless ghazals, the genre of ghazal and mushaira have a unique relationship with the city. In the 1920s, the 'Muslim Gujarati Ghazal Mandal' was created in Rander, a Surat suburb, to organise the first mushaira of Gujarati ghazal. The organisation promoted ghazal writing by hosting mushairas four times a year. The ghazals being recited here were collected into a book. Mareez, Amin Azad, Gani Dahiwala, and Ratilal 'Anil' were among the ghazal poets and promoters. These poets used to meet at Amin's cycling store to talk about ghazal, its form and metres. Several publications began publishing ghazals, which inspired poets to compose more. Amin Azad was the first to publish a collection of ghazals called *Sabaasa*, which was followed by Gani Dahiwala's *Gatam Jharanam* and Ratilal Anil's *Damaro ane Tulsi* (Datta 1390).

Bhagwatikumar Sharma and Manahar Choksi, two renowned poets, continued ghazal poetry after the 1960s. Nayan Desai admires them, "they not only composed excellent ghazals but also inspired and encouraged many rising poets and actively guided them to accelerate their writing" (*Ajavalu* 8).

In 1992, the Hindi Prachar Mandal organised a ghazal workshop. Throughout the eight-month program, participants received instruction on many elements of the ghazal and were motivated to compose their own ghazals. Additional events and seminars presented emerging ghazal poets to Surat and its surrounding regions. Amar Palanpuri, Kishan Sosa, Dr. Dilip Modi, and Pragya Vashi are included among the poets involved. Since that time, poets have endeavoured to enhance the popularity of ghazals.

As previously stated poets possess a certain fascination with their surroundings and are compelled to write about them, poets from Surat articulate their affection and discontent with the city through ghazals, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century and the twenty-first century.

Each organism, encompassing birds, animals, insects, and humans alike, necessitates a secure environment in which to dwell. Some of them live alone, while others choose to live in groups. Humans, on the other hand, like to live in groups. They create a residential colony or community that progressively expands its boundaries and becomes a village, town, or city. Humans shape a city and its culture at first, giving it identity; however, once a city is established, the process is reversed, and the city shapes its citizens, giving them identity. The culture of a city becomes so intertwined with its residents that not only does a human resides in the city, but every human also keeps the city inside.

As history says, Surat has been a dynamic city. Having witnessed social, political, and natural upheavals, the city must have created emotions within its citizens. These emotions differ from person to person, depending on one's experience in the city. Emotions are expressed through several mediums, one among them is poetry. Surat has been represented in several poems written in a variety of genres. Here, my focus is limited to a ghazal on Surat. Ghazal has remained a popular form in Surat. The reason behind choosing the ghazal is its unique form, derived from Arabic and Persian, but found an indelible place in Gujarati literature. It is commonly used to address the subjects of love, pain, and nostalgia. Surat poets take it further and employ it to describe their feelings about the city. Undoubtedly, these

perspectives on the city shift with time and among different people. Ghazals by *Surati* ghazal poets such as Asim Randeri, Bhagwatikumar Sharma, Bakulesh Desai, Nayan Desai, Dhwanil Parekh, and Kiran Chauhan, present themes of urban sensibility, modern and postmodern metropolis, transformation, and society in urban culture, will be included here.

Surat ghazals were initially written by Asim Randeri (1904–2009). Based in Rander (a Surat suburb), he loves the place because it reminds him of her imaginary beloved Leela. He published two collections, *Leela* (1963) and *Tapi Teerey* (1964), both of which comprise ghazals on the city and the river Tapi. He is appreciative of his country and considers it extremely precious. Asim resided in Surat for a while before moving to numerous locales, including Mumbai. His voyage may be tracked via his ghazals, as he writes a farewell poem while leaving, a poem in memory of the city while away, and a poem when he returns, addressing Surat and Tapi. His ghazals are intertwined with love, beloved, and city themes.

It is worth noting that his poems were written around the 1940s or 1950s when India gained independence and later Gujarat became a separate state. Poets opted to write about their motherland and nation during this time, expressing their love for the place. However, such poems were more patriotic than Randeri's, which were romantic in nature. Furthermore, post-independence Indian towns saw a large migration, alienating individuals from their native roots. Asim, who did this, communicates the agony of separation in poems.

While departing from Rander, he penned "Vatan ni Viday," a farewell to the motherland. It reflects a sense of nostalgia and reverence for a homeland, particularly Rander in Surat. The poem blends elements of nature, culture, and spirituality, creating a rich tapestry that honours both the physical and emotional landscape of the poet's home. He bows down to Rander and mentions different elements such as streets, flowers, wind, trees, temples, and mosques. The 'rosy streets' evoke a sense of nostalgia for a place once filled with vibrancy and life. This celebration of nature creates a sense of calm and serenity, indicating that the environment is central to the poet's connection with the homeland. The poet salutes the temples and mosque's minarets, representing both Hindu and Islamic places of worship. This indicates a celebration of cultural and religious unity in Rander, a historically diverse city. The harmonious coexistence of these religious symbols suggests that the city has been a place where different faiths have lived side by side in peace. He writes:

Vatan ni gulābi galiyonne vandan,
Gulo, bulbulo, gul-kaliyone vandan.

Mahekati machalati havāone vandan,
Madili madili ghatāone vandan.

Taruvarne vandan, latāone vandan,
Javāyu nā jyā te jagāone vandan.

Manohar e Taapi kinārāne vandan,
Ae mandir, ae masjid-minārāne vandan. (Randeri 63)

The ghazal also reflects on the shared memories of people and places that have passed. Poets refer to the beautiful bank of Tapi since it reminds him of his love. The mention of friends who are "gone forever" and "broken-down shrines" evokes a sense of loss and mourning. The company here was full of both happiness and sorrow. The joy of love and the anguish of separation from friends is discernable. He compares the anguish of separation from friends or companions to shattered tombs. He writes:

Gayā je sadānā te yārone vandan,
Ae tooti padeli mazārone vandan. (Randeri 63)

(Bow to the companions who had gone for ever,
Bow to those broken tombs.) (the researcher's trans.)

The poet's repeated salutation to the homeland, nature, and religious spaces points to a longing for something that will be missed, lost, or changed. The mention of "friends who are gone forever" and "broken-down shrines" symbolizes this fragmentation. The poem does not present an idealized or continuous past but rather one that has been shattered by time and loss, a common theme in modernist poetry where the past cannot be reclaimed in its entirety.

It focuses on the tension between the past and the present, with the present being characterized by loss or alienation. The poet starts with 'rosy streets' and constantly returns to the beauty of the city (the rosy streets, fragrant winds, the untouched places), however, there is an acknowledgement of change and decay, as seen in the last couplet, the broken shrines, and the mention of those who are no longer present. The poem reflects this tension, suggesting a disconnection between the poet's present world and the world that once was.

When the poet moved to Mumbai, he still had memories of the place and related it to Mumbai. The poet contrasts two cities, Mumbai and Surat, revealing that while physically in Mumbai, his heart and soul remain in Surat. The poet describes Surat as the "true city of love," where life is "drenched in affection." The city becomes a metaphor for a utopian space where love and emotional fulfilment thrive, suggesting that Surat is not just a geographical place but an emotional and spiritual sanctuary. The imagery evokes the physical beauty of the city, likening it to a paradise or a heavenly realm, which aligns with the traditional Ghazal's focus on admiration of beauty, whether it be a person or a place. A *sher* from "Albeli Nagari" says:

Bhale Mumbai mā chhu, pan man tahi chhe,
Gajabni mohini Surat mahi chhe! (Randeri 103)

He further says:

Nagar, e premnu sāchu nagar chhe,
Mohabbat thi jivan jyā tarbatar chhe,

Ahin chhe shvās ne jivan tahi chhe,
Ajab ranginiyo Surat mahi chhe! (Randeri 103)

The city truly is a 'city of love,' where life is filled with affection. He poeticized the metropolis by frequently contrasting Mumbai with Surat, inserting phrases 'here' and 'there.' Though he breathes here (in Mumbai), life exists there (in Surat). A romantic vision of the city is presented by many motives concerning the attractiveness of women. He is driven to paradise when he sees the gorgeous faces of "*hoor*" and "*apsara*" (nymphs) at Gopipur. His throne is in Mumbai, but his seat and kingdom of love - "*pranay ni sultanate*" are in Surat, where his love is. His passion for the city stems from his beloved, and she makes him love it. He looks careless about his household and the rest of the world, but he recalls the metropolis that inspires him to write. From his writing, it appears that his beloved and Surat are synonyms.

The poet's refusal to fully engage with the present (Mumbai) and his longing to return to an idealized past reflects a modernist scepticism toward progress and modern urban life. The past (Surat) is not merely a memory but an active counterpoint to the alienation felt in

the modern world. This dual existence, physically in Mumbai but emotionally in Surat, echoes modernist explorations of how individuals navigate multiple identities in a world of rapid change. The poet's heart and soul belong to Surat, but his body is in Mumbai, suggesting an existential tension between where one is and where one belongs.

His next poem is opposed to the one above. In the previous example, he emphasises Surat by depicting what is present in Surat, while in the ghazal "Tapi no kinaro to nathi," he recalls Surat by depicting what is not present in Mumbai. He indicates where he sees the beloved in the previous poem, and in this poem, he reveals where he misses her in Mumbai. As he says, "*mujne majdhāre, o mojāo, fari lai chālo / māro hetu, mari manjil, aa kināro to nathi*," showing his reluctance to live here as it is not his destination. There are many attractions in Mumbai, but none can replace his 'Leela' and the bank of the river Tapi. Surat's void cannot be filled by Mumbai: "*Lākh ākarshano Mumbai mā bhale ho, 'Aasim'! / Māri 'Leela', māri Taapi no kināro to nathi*!"

The opening couplets, where the poet speaks of the shore being an illusion, a conventional symbol of safety or completion, is revealed to be an illusion, just as modernism reveals that what people believe to be secure foundations, whether in society, love, or identity, are often unstable and deceptive.

Ek bhramnā chhe, hakikatmā sahāro to nathi,
Jene samajo chho kināro, ae kināro to nathi.

Ek pan phoolmā ansar tamāro to nathi,
Bhās keval chhe bahārono, bahāro to nathi.

Ae khajāno chhe gagan kero, amāro to nathi,
Ek pan ema mukaddarno sitāro to nathi.

Kem acharajthi jagat tāki rahyo māru vadan?
Sahaj juvo, koi padchhāyo tamāro to nathi. (Dave 57)

When the poet comes to Surat (Rander) after some time, he bows before it once again. He is delighted to be here. In "Janmabhoomi ne," his passion for the city is visible through his willingness to sacrifice life not once, but a hundred times, "*nyochhāvar ho tuj par thi so vār Jeevan."* The land is exquisite; each grain of sand is like a star, making it more

attractive than the sky. Its sand is like gold, and its particles resemble diamonds. The city has carved an eternal place in the poet's heart, and all he sees is beauty. Even after the onset of autumn, its gardens retain their spring-like freshness. When he claims that no one in the world can comprehend the value Surat has in his eyes, the poet accepts his subjective perception of the city:

Ushā tāri raliyāmani ne nirālee,
Gulābonae ras tāri sandhyāni lāli.

Sitārā sami rajakanoni pathāri,
Gaganthi y unnat dise bhom tāri.

Ane tāri māti je kānchan sami chhe,
Raje raj badhe eni heerākani chhe.

Nashili bahāro ae tāra chamanmā,
Javān chhe khiānā y je aagmanmā.

……..

Nahi koi samji shake vishwabharmā,
Je tāri mahattā chhe māri nazarmā. (Randeri 104)

He went on to detail the valuables he had obtained from the city. Surat bestowed motherly tenderness as well as passionate love. But the finest gift he received from this place was Leela. He has finally revealed the reason for his comeback. He requests the city to return Leela. He uses puns when he expresses a wish to see her *surat* (face) in Surat city. He is agitated and concerned about her. The poet asks the motherland to return Leela since his eyes are anxious to see.

Considering Leela as a 'city' might lead to a variety of readings of the ghazal. The poet comes to Surat after a period of absence in search of his fictitious beloved Leela, who is not around. Using Leela as a metaphor, the poet wishes to return to the old Surat, which has changed since he left. His only wish is to see the old Surat and relive his memories.

Bhagwatikumar Sharma (1934–2018) is a significant poet who has written ghazals that both glorify and bemoan the city. Sharma's Surat has left an indelible mark on his writing since he has been the city's constant companion and explorer. His autobiography,

Surat muj ghāyal Bhoomi, vividly shows that his life was intertwined with the developing Surat. His ghazal, therefore, depicts both the luxurious metropolitan lifestyle and its problems. His childhood metropolis was far superior to the one he now resides in. He has merged himself into the city. As a result, changes in the city might be traumatic for him. His ghazals about the city were written around 1970 when India experienced a major upheaval due to rapid urbanisation and modernization, and modern comforts began to be introduced into Indian urban houses.

In his ghazals, Sharma seems disappointed with the urban changes. The city speaks in "Shahere lakheli ghazal" (A ghazal by the city). The city embodies the agony of modern transformation:

Television mā hu chaherāyā karu;
Air-condition mā pankhāyā karu,

Hu hatheli jevadu ākash chhu;
Skyscraper thiye taradāya karu,

Chhe ahin trānsistor ni āmrakunj;
Tahuke tahuke toye rundhāyā karu. (Thakar and Vyas 33)

The ghazal is a vivid exploration of modern urban life, using metaphors and imagery that depict the speaker's disconnection from their surroundings and the fragmented identity that emerges in an increasingly mechanized and alienating world. The contrast between nature and technology, tradition, and modernity, is central to the poem's themes.

It depicts the luxury of modern urban living, in which the city is discussed on television; the sky is small, like a palm cracked by skyscrapers; and transistors are like branches suffocating the metropolis. The city experiences social and personal changes in addition to physical ones. With disdain, he analyses the 'so-called' growth of the city, in which humans have two faces, like a 'double-decker jungle.' The metaphors of the "split face," the push button, and melting into asphalt emphasize the speaker's fragmented identity. In the chaotic, mechanical world of the city, the speaker's individuality is lost, and they become just another part of the machine. The city seems to demand conformity, leaving no room for personal or cultural identity.

The city is a push button, a symbol of instant gratification and the mechanization of life. Everything happens in a moment, as though there is no time for reflection or depth. The speaker's existence is reduced to quick, automatic actions, much like modern technology that operates with the push of a button. The image of splashing in an 'empty coffee cup' suggests futility and emptiness; despite the frenetic activity, there is no real substance or fulfilment. The coffee cup, often associated with relaxation or socializing, is now empty, further emphasizing the hollow nature of modern life.

The final couplet depicts the city as a bat of culture (*sanskruti nu vanvāgol*) on a tall tower. The city, with its towers and skyscrapers, symbolizes progress, but for the speaker, it is a place of detachment and loneliness. The tower is not a place of achievement but one of existential suspension, where the speaker is neither fully part of the modern world nor able to return to their cultural roots. The symbol of a bat also represents the absence of trees, which have been replaced with buildings. A bat hanging upside down is how the culture is described in this context, which alludes to how the culture is evolving.

Sharma, a modernist poet, uses modern approaches to handle the ghazal. His usage of English vocabulary in practically every sentence was unusual at the time.

"Flat mā" (In the Flat) is a ghazal that evokes the city's apartment culture. He portrays a sense of isolation and alienation within modern urban life, particularly through the imagery of living in a flat (apartment). Since the city is constantly growing both horizontally and vertically, people must live in apartments that are often very small. The mention of "few square feet" emphasizes the cramped, suffocating feeling, while the idea of being confined "within myself" reflects deeper, inner isolation, one of the biggest scars of the contemporary metropolis It is not just a lack of space but also a lack of identity that makes the poet unknown to himself or others – "*hu lāgu chhu mujne j par flat mā*." Natural, life-giving elements like fresh air are replaced by sterile, mechanical substitutes, suggesting that the speaker's life has become devoid of vitality. The air is conditioned, the sun sets early, and creepers in barren pots resemble autumn. The 'flat' is the motif of narrowness, representing a lack of room in the city, but it represents more than just physical narrowness to humankind; it also represents a lack of space for nature. The apartment also symbolises a lack of emotions, a lack of communication, and a cramped or limited city life. 'TV, phone, décor, soft-cover' demonstrates that contemporary humans' lives are confined to a single room; he does not venture outside. It represents a contemporary city dweller's detached life. The final couplet,

“Hello - Hi - Excuse me - Thanks a lot,” emphasizes the superficiality of modern communication. The speaker describes the flat as a “city of empty words,” reflecting a modernist concern with the breakdown of authentic communication in the modern world.

Though the poet is aware of the changing Surat, his affection for the city remains unwavering. In his autobiography, he says, “I believe myself inseparable with Surat” (Sharma 5), a tone he conveys in a ghazal:

Aam to chhe ek bheenā bheenā sthalnu nām Surat;
Aankh chhe Tapi nadi ne enā jalnu nām Surat.

Janmathi, sadiyo thi māra annajalnu nām Surat;
Mara lohima bhaleli ek palnu nām Surat. (Thakar and Vyas 135)

The poem treats Surat as more than a physical city, it is an emotional, spiritual, and historical identity that defines the speaker. The use of “blood,” “chest,” and “moment” highlights how intertwined the city is with the speaker’s personal existence. Not only do humans live in it, but it also lives in humans. The poet also demonstrates his inner Surat here. His eyes are river Tapi and the water is Surat. The city always rests in his eyes. Surat has been feeding him food that has been blended with blood since his birth. He is willing to give up paradise for Surat. The metaphor of the lotus and bee demonstrates how much he enjoyed Surat throughout his life. Surat is Lotus, the most beautiful spot in the world for him. It is an emotion manifested as land.

The city was continually growing with the expansion of industry and residential areas during this time. “Jal ma Surat” is a ghazal on the expansion of Surat, depicting the locations where he feels Surat’s presence. It reflects a deeply personal and spiritual connection to the city of Surat, where the speaker perceives the city’s essence as omnipresent, woven into the fabric of both the physical world and their internal experience. The city has expanded its boundaries from land to sea. He feels the presence of Surat wherever he goes. The city is constantly changing:

Sthalmā Surat, Jalmā Surat;
Marā antahsatlmā Surat.
…….

Shikhar - kheen nā vārāferā;
Badalātu palpal mā Surat.
……
Uttar-Dakshin-Purav-Pashchim;
Pagnā das aangalmā Surat. (Thakar and Vyas 411)

However, the expansion is not just physical. The city and its significance in his heart grow as well.

The poet's feelings for the place fluctuate with time. The poet, who loves Surat and enjoys being there, is trapped within it during the flood. Floods have long been Surat's worst fear. Though the city advances, the issues it has encountered in the past continue or intensify. Surat is seen under flood in "Pur Ghazal" (2009). In the opening couplet, the speaker establishes the central theme of entrapment. Water, traditionally a symbol of life, becomes a metaphor for a prison, suggesting that what might seem natural and fluid has become constricting. The reference to "an unknown place" further emphasizes the speaker's disorientation and confusion—they are not only trapped but also lost in an unfamiliar, dark environment. This reflects a modernist theme of alienation and the search for meaning in a chaotic world:

Jakdāi hun gayo chhu aa jalni turang mā-
Andhār ghuntātā koi sthalni turangmā. (Thakar and Vyas 411)

The contrast between the pure, crystal-clear water and the chaotic whirlpool highlights a transition from clarity to confusion. The speaker reminisces about a time when things were simpler and clearer, but now they are caught in a vortex of disorder, unable to regain control. Mud and dull water enter the houses. The absence of both electricity and sunlight has resulted in darkness. In the final couplet, the speaker longs for the sun, a symbol of hope or clarity, but remains bound within the waters, unable to escape. The comparison to a bee trapped in the lotus is a poignant metaphor. While the lotus is often a symbol of beauty and purity, here it becomes a prison for the bee, suggesting that even in seemingly beautiful or natural circumstances, the speaker feels trapped. The bee's situation mirrors the speaker's experience of being bound by forces that, while natural, have become suffocating.

Sharma is unique in the sense that he has lived in both old and modern Surat. His ghazals show us that the changing city is terrible for some and enjoyable for others. In his autobiography *Surat Muj Ghayal Bhoomi*, he writes about changing Surat:

> *Shri Krishna ni krupavarshā thi sudāmā ni tutifuti jhumpadi ne sthāne rājmahal khado thai jāy tem mārā bālpan nu surat aa chha-sāt dāyākā mā lagbhag nāmshesh thayu chhe ane tenu sthān sarjāi rahelā ek 'mega city' a levā mandyu chhe. Surat no aa vikās māre māte jem ānandprad tem avsādprerak pan chhe.* (6)
>
> (Just as Sudama's broken hut transformed into a grand palace through Lord Krishna's grace, Surat of my childhood has nearly vanished in the these six to seven decades, and has been replaced by an emerging 'Mega-city.' Development of Surat is both enjoyable and terrible for me.) (the researcher's trans.)

Bakulesh Desai (1947–present) sees the city as a site of incidents. Every morning in an urban space, there is a new story to discuss. It is quite difficult to achieve your goals. The mind is continually making new wishes, and humans go around gasping all day. Scams and deceit are common topics in newspapers and files.

Variation and segregation were exacerbated by urban sprawl and an increasing number of residents from diverse backgrounds and occupations. The aridity of interpersonal ties in the city raises questions about so-called development. It contrasts the ideal qualities of warmth, empathy, and human connection with the coldness and detachment the speaker experiences in the city. There is a clear yearning for genuine human relationships in a world that seems increasingly indifferent and self-centred. The poem begins by contrasting open, welcoming doors and lively greetings, symbols of hospitality and friendliness, with the reality of the city. The rhetorical question "and in this city?" introduces a sense of doubt and loss. The speaker is implying that these qualities are missing in the modern urban environment. The metropolis looks to be burdened by physical labour as much as mental tension. The final couplet poses the most profound question of all: where is true humanity? The speaker yearns for a world where humans care for one another out of sheer humanity, without any selfish motives. The concluding question is a powerful critique of the modern urban world, suggesting that true humanity, where people act selflessly for the sake of others, no longer exists in the city:

Mānas vade, mānas tani, mānasne kāj je,
E 'mānasāhi,' yār?.... Ane aa shaher mā? (B. Desai, *Amirat* 98)

Desai spoke about situations that continue to occur, whether they are natural disasters or violence caused by humans, that damage the city, both physically and socially. The communal violence of 1992 was one such incident in Surat. In a ghazal titled "Ayodhya Kand ane Surat," Bakulesh Desai expresses the fear and destruction of the terrifying tragedy. However, the poem provides no indications regarding the specific incident; the only clue is the title. Rumours exacerbate the worst situations under such dread when people lose their heads. The metaphor of "old age" (*budhāpo*) implies that individuals have lost the ability to use their senses. The blindness in youthful eyes represents the loss of vision or purpose among the younger generation, who should ideally be full of hope and ambition but are instead blind to the larger realities of life. Eyes can see but they avoid; ears can hear nothing but just rumours and the mouth says only "*māro-kāpo*" (kill and cut off). The poet requests to resume the activities in the city that have been halted due to curfew. The words like 'cut off,' 'blindness,' 'deafness,' 'no spark left,' 'hearts have shrunk,' 'frozen under curfew,' reflection on the alienation, disillusionment, and loss of human connection in the modern world:

Gabharu sanvedan gherāyu...
Haiye hothe: "Māro - Kāpo!"

Tark-dalilo surangachhāi,
Temā nā chingāri chāmpo.

Dariyā-dil pan sankochāyā,
Konā ae kātil abhishāpo?

Curfew-vash je thiji gai chhe,
Khalkhal harfar pāchhi aapo. (B. Desai, *Amirat* 92)

Another tragic event occurred in 1994, as Surat was hit by the plague. The city suffered a significant loss of lives and resources. "Surat Muj Ran Samu" portrays the city dwellers' activities and emotions during critical condition. The speaker is committed to facing struggles, using Surat as a metaphor for his personal battlefield. It conveys a strong sense of resolve and loyalty to the city, even in the face of hardship. The ghazal is a defiant

declaration of the speaker's connection to Surat, positioning the city as a battlefield. People are eager for updates and continuously inquiring each other, filling the air with accusations. The poet urges people to act rather than complain. They reject passive lamentation, emphasizing that the real battle is won through effort, not words. In difficult times, unity should be a priority, and the last couplet urges this to break down the wall of discrimination. The idea of breaking down walls can also be tied to the social and economic divisions exacerbated by the plague. Pandemics often highlight existing inequalities, and this line suggests a desire to dismantle those structures that prevent solidarity and collective survival:

Hun ahinno he 'Bakulesh'! Kyāno tu?
Bheent le bhāngu! Surat muj ran samu! (B. Desai, *Amirat* 98)

Though he was ready to sacrifice for Surat, he also felt pain. His experience of the postmodern metropolis in the twenty-first century has been traumatic. The evolved city can be an opportunity for the outcomers, but those who have watched it grow have recognised the difference. A postmodern metropolis provides a ray of hope, a spark of hope and later that desires burn us. In "Nagar Viti" he says:

Ek tanakho aashno chāmpe nagar
Ne pachi thi jindagi bāle nagar

Zher chhe e, kon bhāi, chakhe nagar?!
Em dhāryu to have same nagar!! (B. Desai, *Aapoaap* 15)

The city instils a desire in its newcomers, yet that spark persists throughout our lives and prevents us from living happily. It keeps him weighed down with a burden like *vetal* (spirit). "What begins in the morning is the same by evening in the city" reflects the monotonous nature of life in the city. The repetition of seasons and festivals, where the morning is no different from the evening, symbolizes the stagnation and lack of change in city life. It suggests that despite the passage of time, everything remains the same, unremarkable and dull, contributing to a feeling of emotional numbness. He criticizes how modern cities, despite their bustling activity, leave people feeling that every day is the same, and the excitement and richness of life are lost in routine. The emotions of the city are obscured by fat. He wonders how the city can exist with so much weight that is emotional deadness.

In another poem, he discusses the lack of emotions and mental shrinkage among city dwellers. The metaphors of shrinking skies, and fragile relationships made of glass evoke a sense of confinement, detachment, and fragility. The imagery of a pale sun and illness suggests an underlying decay and fatigue affecting the people and the city itself, marking it as a place of growing emotional and social emptiness.

Nayan Desai (1946–2023) uses a crumbling fort wall to link the city's history and present in "Surat: ghazal sketch: Killo." Sometimes a ruin from the past is kept in all its beauty, while other times it is little more than rubble. Surat falls within the last type for this scenario. Surat was a city with a double fort, inner and outer, that scarcely has any pieces in decent shape, but every piece of its ruins is a part of its golden past, and every piece has something to say. The fort, once a symbol of strength and resilience, is now crumbling, just as the city seems to have lost its essence. The poem evokes feelings of nostalgia, but also acknowledges the unstoppable flow of time that reduces even the grandest structures and civilizations to ruins. Desai can hear the fort's chatter and the laments of ghosts. It is no longer like a 'fort.' There is no choice but to evolve in response to the city's fast changes. The fort has seen Surat's transformation. The speaker compares the fort to the famous Taj Mahal, known for its timeless beauty and endurance. Unlike the Taj, which seems to defy time, this fort is crumbling and will not stand forever. The speaker invites their beloved to witness this moment of decay and transience, understanding that the fort, like life itself, cannot last forever. The mention of the Tapi River suggests that the weight of the fort's collapse is emotionally overwhelming, its ruins flowing like tears into the speaker's eyes:

Killānā khandiyermā razhale chhe aa nagar;
Bhootkaal yaad aavtā pādchhāyā bhāmbhare.

Chālo priye, aa 'Taj' nathi ke ubhā rahyā,
Killāno boj aankhmā Taapi thai tare. (N. Desai, *Angali* 54)

According to Desai, Surat is a city of glass. His ghazal "Kach na Shaher ma" represents city life. People who dwell in the modern city start their day by confronting their own reflections in a mirror. People in this city are emotionally guarded, hiding behind masks of fog to protect them from being "broken." The fog could represent confusion, uncertainty, or even fear of vulnerability. The trembling river is an image of disconnection from nature, suggesting that even natural forces are disturbed in this urban environment. Tradition,

symbolized by the ferrymen's songs, has been lost. This contrasts the natural world with the mechanical, fast-paced urban environment:

Kāyank aavi chade kok tahuko to trāfficmā bhoolo pade;
Mor nu tolu swapnamā jovu male kāchnā shehermā.

Kyāny mātini foram ke kumpal nathi, lyo have shu thāshe?
R.C.C. nā mānas nā kai sāmbhalye kāchnā shehermā. (N. Desai, *Aangali* 52)

The bird's call (a symbol of nature) is drowned out by the noise and chaos of city life, represented by traffic. The peacock, a symbol of beauty and vibrancy, can only be found in dreams, indicating that nature and its wonders are no longer part of daily reality in this modern city. The natural world has been pushed to the margins, and people only experience it in fleeting, imagined moments. The land is mostly occupied up by roads and buildings, and the open space is filled with paved blocks. The absence of soil and growth symbolizes a broader absence of human connection, empathy, and emotional growth. The man of concrete refers to the modern urban dweller who has become hardened and unresponsive, no longer able to hear the call of nature or the emotional needs of others. This line emphasizes the dehumanizing effects of urbanization, where people lose touch with both nature and their own humanity. As a result, there is no bud or petrichor after the rain.

Although the city has changed, the poem illustrates its beauty through Tapi. Desai's ghazal evokes a beautiful evening on the bank of the river Tapi. Surat seems dazzling from a boat, like a lamp in the hands of the sky. The riverfront temples resonate with prayer, and their flag seems to engage in dialogue with the breeze. The sun has reached the last step of a ghat, and the setting sun seems like a lamp, illuminating the city.

Dhwanil Parekh (1976–present), a young modern poet, suggests that the city feels so suffocating and oppressive that the only perceived way out is through extreme measures, like death or destruction. The city becomes a space where individuals feel scrutinized, judged, and forced to prove their worth or identity, often in unforgiving and harsh ways. This creates a sense of inner turmoil, where people struggle to maintain their identity amidst societal expectations. The city seems packed, like a fortified castle. The walls symbolize the emotional and psychological barriers that prevent freedom or escape. Desires or expectations, according to the poet, are slaves since they merely make a person run throughout the day and, when not met, make people frustrated. They are so heavy that they become the people's

masters, turning them into slaves of societal demands and personal pressures. The city has lost its vitality and openness, becoming a place where ambition and hope are stifled:

Chhutakāro fakt fānsi hoy jya te aa nagar...
Jaat ae rite chakāsi hoy jya te aa nagar.

Chotarfi bandh killā jevu lāge, shu thayu?
Aa apekshāo j dāsi hoy jyā te aa nagar. (N. Desai, *Ajavalu* 127)

The analogy of humans as 'travelers' and 'helmsmen' pertains to the city's perpetual dynamism. Jobs are changing constantly in megacities, and people live like tourists. It is no longer possible to stay in the same place for generations. Everyone must continue to go forward on their own, as self-sufficient individuals seeking to make a living. A person, like a helmsman, drives his own life, with no influence from society or big families. Despite the various settings or opportunities, they all lead to the same outcome: self-destruction or loss. The individual must steer themselves through the overwhelming chaos, but the journey only leads to an inevitable end.

"Bhukamp chhe" (It is an Earthquake) is another ghazal by him which is about an earthquake. The city has always been the victim of disasters. Here, the poet presents the scene of destruction caused by the earthquake. Roads and buildings have been converted to bricks. Many are tormented and blood flows everywhere. The city does not look like a 'city' but ruins with corpses and screams. The imagery of shaking breaths, pulsing blood, vultures, collapsing buildings, and ruins evokes a scene of total devastation. The earthquake represents a violent force of nature or life event that disrupts everything, turning the city into a graveyard. This could symbolize the destruction of a way of life or the emotional ruin caused by a catastrophe, be it literal or metaphorical. The overwhelming sense of death and decay permeates the poem, reflecting the fragility of human existence amidst such chaos. He says:

Ek ghar ne ek mānas aam to banne kabar,
Gidhnu tolu ude chhe ke thayo bhookamp chhe.

…….

Aa nagar kyā chhe, are! Chhe lāshonu khander ae;
Kai nodhāru rade chhe ke thayo bhukamp chhe. (N. Desai, *Ajavalu* 130)

Kiran Chauhan's (1974–present) autobiographical ghazal "Bhid mā Bhatki Rahelā te Ame" (I am the one who is wandering in the crowd) conveys a profound sense of isolation inside an urban setting. The speaker perceives themselves as mindlessly traversing the crowd, alienated and overlooked inside the city's expanse. This illustrates the modernist notion of alienation, wherein individuals experience a sense of dislocation and invisibility, even in the presence of others. While several poets assert that individuals remain unrecognisable, Chauhan contends that he is transparent and that others may readily discern his thoughts. The speaker experiences a sense of emotional vulnerability, as though their innermost thoughts and feelings are apparent to others. This transparency exposes vulnerability, since the speaker can no longer shield himself from the scrutiny or judgement of others:

Bhidmā bhataki rahelā te ame
Shehr mā bhulā padelā te ame.

Man amāru spast vānche chhe badhā,
Pārdarshak thai gayela te ame. (N. Desai, *Ajavalu* 88)

The speaker sees life as a cycle of reflections, shadows, and memories that they carry with them every day. This line suggests a sense of transience and impermanence, where daily life becomes a blur of faint impressions and recollections. The speaker feels as though they are present in the crowd, but only as a shadow or reflection of their true self, which highlights the fleeting and fragmented nature of urban existence.

Surat's ghazals have become the collective voice of modern and postmodern cities. The modern city provides luxurious facilities to help people but at the cost of social ills. The pursuit of 'More' has degraded civilization socially and morally. The main concern of these poets, however, is the expansion of the city and dwindling humanity. Many of the ghazals express a profound sense of disconnection from the city, people, and even oneself. Phrases like 'transparent in the city' or 'wandering lost in the crowd' evoke a feeling of isolation despite being surrounded by multitudes. This mirrors the modernist critique of how urban environments foster loneliness and emotional alienation, where the individual feels both overwhelmed and invisible. In some ghazals, the city is depicted as a closed-off, suffocating space, described with metaphors like fortresses or tombs. This evokes the modernist critique of the city as a trap, where individuals are restricted by societal expectations, capitalism, and

mechanization. The mention of ‘closed doors,’ ‘walls,’ and ‘shattered mirrors’ reflects how urban life limits freedom and authentic self-expression.

The imagery of decay, whether physical or emotional, appears frequently. Cities are often portrayed as spaces that are either in ruins or are ruining the individuals within them. For example, the ghazals speak of ‘empty coffins,’ ‘collapsing buildings,’ and ‘crumbling towers,’ symbolic of not just physical decay but also the moral and spiritual erosion experienced by city dwellers. This aligns with the modernist focus on the decline of traditional values and the bleakness of contemporary existence. There is a clear emphasis on the artificiality and emptiness of modern life, particularly in cities. The ghazals often reference modern technologies, buildings made of concrete and steel, and lifeless relationships between people, even humans turned to RCC.

The contrast between nature and the artificial city is a central modernist theme, with urban spaces depicted as sterile, mechanical, and void of emotional warmth—nothing but glass in this city. The ‘glass city’ metaphor represents the fragility and coldness of relationships in a capitalist, material-driven society. Another core modernist theme is the fragmentation of the self. In the ghazals, people appear to be losing their individuality, becoming part of the crowd or fading into the urban landscape. There is a sense of people becoming mere reflections or shadows of their former selves — ‘faces veiled in mist,’ ‘mirrors reflecting only emptiness.’ This is a common motif in modernist literature, where the individual struggles to maintain a coherent sense of identity in a rapidly changing, depersonalized world.

A recurring theme is the search for meaning in an otherwise oppressive and meaningless urban environment. The ghazals express a longing to break free from the mechanized existence of the city and reconnect with a deeper sense of purpose, often through metaphors of escape. The city is portrayed as a place where even dreams and emotions are suppressed, and yet, there is a desire to transcend this confinement, “I won’t flee this city, but it feels like a desert to me.” In keeping with modernist themes, many of the ghazals convey a sense of despair. The urban environment is depicted as bleak and unforgiving, where efforts to find solace or connection are ultimately futile— “the city is dying, but no one reads its obituary.” This speaks to the modernist sense of disillusionment with modern life, where progress and industrialization have led not to fulfilment, but to spiritual and emotional emptiness.

Poets have varied perspectives on the city, but all of them have a concern: the 'changing urban culture.' For example, Sharma perceives it to be continually changing – "*badlātu pal pal mā surat*," but Bakulesh perceives it to be constant – "*Ek jevā mausamo - tahevāro chhe / je savāre ej chhe sānje nagar*." Sharma sees the physical city and, as a result, it changes, whereas Bakulesh Desai views the psychological/social city and, as a result, people remain unchanged. In modern urbanity, both the physical and psychological/social components are important.

Traditional ghazals are intricately woven with metaphors, motifs, and symbols, which allow poets to convey complex emotions, spiritual themes, and philosophical ideas in a subtle, evocative manner. The beauty of these elements lies in their ability to encapsulate vast meanings within the confines of the ghazal's tight structure. Sky, air, beloved, separation, journey, wine, tavern, intoxication, candle, moth, garden, silence, are some traditional images and metaphors widely used in ghazals. Here the poets employed in nuanced ways to express modernist themes of alienation, disillusionment, and the search for meaning. The poets used familiar metaphors and symbols like – shore, flowers, lotus, stars, shadow, love, ocean, eyes, moon, river, sky, silence, but reframes them to express disillusionment, alienation, and existential uncertainty, common concerns in modernist poetry.

The ghazals also make extensive use of new metaphors, motifs, and symbols, blending classical ghazal traditions with modernist, urban themes. These elements are used to evoke a contemporary sense of alienation, fragmentation, and existential discontent, characteristic of life in modern, urban environments. The key metaphors, motifs, and symbols in these ghazals are – 'The Flat' is a symbol of confinement, 'air-conditioner' as an artificiality of air, 'transistor,' 'push button' as an instantaneous modern existence, skyscrapers, city, 'RCC' represents sterility and dehumanization. The juxtaposition of classical motifs with modernist sensibilities creates a tension between tradition and the individual's fragmented experience of the contemporary world.