

Reflection of Culture of Gujarat in the Glory of Patan by K.
M. Munshi



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Literature springs from our inborn love of telling a story, of arranging words in pleasing patterns, of expressing in words some special aspects of our human experience. Literature is permanent expressions in words written or spoken. Literature expresses thoughts, feelings, ideas or other special aspects of human experience. Shri Kanaiyalal Munshi is renowned for his novels and plays based on history of Gujarat mainly involving the Solanki kings. The Solanki is a royal Hindu clan that ruled parts of western and central India from the 10th to 13th centuries. They ruled in Gujarat from their capital Anhilwara (modern day Siddhpur-Patan) from 942 to 1244. History and literature have been intertwined since the very beginning. Real events were recounted as stories to teach the younger generation **wisdom or lessons about their origins**. History intends to record events as accurately as possible, while literature interprets historical or everyday events in an imaginative way.

Shri Kanaiyalal Munshi is one of Gujarat's most well-known literary writers. His historical novels have contributed profoundly to the sense of past that Gujarat lives with. A multi-faceted personality, he was a prominent lawyer, freedom fighter and politician. He was also the founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. K.M. Munshi, a name engraved in golden letters for his significant contribution in the field of historical novels set in the times of this dynasty in Gujarat, strove throughout his life to enhance the glory of Gujarat through a variety of literary forms. He is known for his consistent efforts in enlightening the Gujarat consciousness in his historical novels.

Munshi's historical trilogy consisting of *Patan-ni-Prabhuta* (*The Glory of Gujarat*), *Gujarat-no-Nath* (*The Master of Gujarat*) and *Rajahiraj* (*The Emperor*) depicts consolidation of Gujarat in the days of the Chalukyan kings in the ninth and twelfth century. The trilogy is based on the most splendid period of Hindu Gujarat, the reign of Siddharaj Jayasinh. The

kings of this dynasty were called 'Chaulakyan' in Sanskrit whereas they were known as 'Solanki' in Gujarati. Munshi's other novels -*Jaya Somant* deals with the fall of the Chalukyans whereas his novel *Prithvi Vallabh* unfolds the romantic tale of magnificent Munj and glamorous Mrunaldevi. His other works include *Jay Krishnavatara* (*on Lord Krishna*), *Bhagavan Parasurama* (*on Parshurama*), and *Tapasvini* (*The Lure of Power*).

Acknowledged as the foremost writer in modern Gujarati literature, including novels, dramas, memoirs and history in Gujarati, as also several historical and other works in English, notable *Gujarat and Its Literature*, *Imperial Gurjaras*, *Creative Art of Life*, *to Badrinath*, *The End of an Era*, *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life*, *Saga of Indian Sculpture*, *Pilgrimage to Freedom Vols. I-II* and *Foundations of India Culture*.

Through historical novels, Munshi attempted to make lifeless pages of the history of Gujarat appear real and tangible to the readers. Munshi's intention was to recreate the magnificence and glory of Gujarat of the Solanki period His historical novels are the stories of extraordinary events of life of exceptionally great characters. The pivotal characters of his most celebrated novels are not the kings of Gujarat, but their chief ministers who are mighty, intelligent and dedicated to the well-being and prosperity of Gujarat. The art of Munshi lies in the fact that he reconstructs imaginatively the life of the past.

Depiction of Political, Social and Cultural Environment in Patan-ni-Prabhut

The Glory of Patan is the first book in an epic trilogy about the exploits of the magnificent Chalukya dynasty at a crucial period in the history of Gujarat. In this novel of, *Patan-ni-Prabhuta*, Munshi has very artistically presented the relationship of Minaldevi, the Queen of Patan and Munjal Mehta, the Chief Minister of Patan. It is a story of the kingdom of Patan facing an ominous future. When the king Karnadev is lying on his deathbed and his son, Jaydev, is too young to ascend the throne, rumours

abound of scheming warlords intent on establishing their own independence and powerful merchants plotting to wrest control from Patan Fort. There is also the shadowy monk Anandsuri and his vision to unite Patan under one religion: Jainism. In the eye of this gathering storm are Queen Minaldevi and the shrewd chief minister Munjal Mehta. Both have striven to maintain order in Patan and ensure that Jaydev's succession is secure. But the attraction between them is threatened by betrayal and intrigue, with dramatic consequences for the future of Patan. The Glory of Patan is a translation of the classic Gujarati novel Patan Ni Prabhuta – first in the series of Patan Trilogy. This historical fiction talks about the hey days of Patan when Solanki dynasty used to rule from Patan. It is a story of the politics in royal families. A story of relationships between Jains and Rajputs. It is the story where women stay behind men but their role is like that of the neck – that decides where the head moves. It is the story of the glorious days of Gujarat.

The Glory of Patan is a beautifully written book. Each character is so well etched out. The characters are all inspired by the known historical characters. There is Minal Devi – the reigning queen of Patan, who is the mastermind behind the politics of Patan. She has the ability to stay close to the man she loves while being married to the king. But, her hunger for power would drive her to not even trust him. Add to this the fact that she is a Jain married to a Rajput king – her loyalties cannot be trusted by either side. She can play one against the other to stay on top.

There is the region of Gujarat – you understand how the kingdoms operated. And there are smaller segments of each kingdom who pay their taxes to the larger one. A kind of loose federation system. There are Nagar Seth's or the wealthy merchants who funded almost everything – from the luxury lifestyles of the royal families to the wars. Without them, nothing much would move. Their allegiance is necessary for any king to succeed. You see the interdependence of these two different sides of the coin. You see the way wars were fought, how the army was kept motivated. It is a lesson in how Kingdoms operated. We also get a fair introduction to the geography of Gujarat. The only question I have is that the story keeps referring to River Saraswati. This cannot be the original Saraswati river of Indus Valley Civilization as it dried long before the time of Solankis in Gujarat.

Patan-ni-Prabhuta, the first historical romance attempted by Munshi presents a picture of the historic days that shuddered Patan, the capital city of Gujarat, immediately after the demise of Karandev Solanki, the King of Gujarat. Jayasinh Solanki, the

son of Karandev, being a minor, aged only twelve years, was to be crowned the King. But his young age was an obstacle in his path of succession as a king. The perplexed people of Patan – Jains and Hindus, Ministers and Nobles became victim of the divided loyalties in the baffling and uncertain political situation of Patan.

Munshi has vividly described the intrigues & counter-intrigues to make and break alliances with a purpose of acquiring the dominating position in the State – all occurring at the backdrop of the royal throne of Patan. The complicated situation that arises in Patan due to the willful ambition of Queen Minaldevi to rule Patan singlehandedly and her differences with Munjal, the Minister of the State, is well presented by Munshi in the first novel. Moreover, the trickery played by Jain *sadhu*, Anandsuri who wishes to convert the whole of Gujarat into Jainism, is also depicted judiciously at the hands of Munshi. Munjal's zeal and devotion for the national unity as well as his crucial role in the reconciliation of conflicting interests and his success in crowning the boy Jayasinh as the King of Gujarat is the key phenomenon that dominates the novel. Munshi has put before the reader the conflicting ideologies and political connivances prevailing among the people of Gujarat during the Solanki age in a skillful manner. Munshi has exercised the power of his imagination in depicting the historical background of the novel. The novel encompasses the period from 1066 A.D. to 1143 A.D. The role of astute Prime Minister Munjal in ascertaining the unity of Gujarat and establishing it as a strong unifying nation is effectively narrated in the novel. Moreover historical facts such as King Karnadev's death, the invasion of Malwa over Gujarat, resistance of the residents of Patan, the efforts of Minaldevi in establishing the dominance of Chandravati in Patan and revolt of the chieftains of Patan, along with tug-of-war for power among the Rajputs are meticulously presented in the novel *Patan-ni-Prabhuta*. The chief characters of the novel such as Karnadev, Munjal, Deviprasad, Tribhuvanpal, Kak are based on true historical characters. Also the places like Patan, Chandravati, Prabhas Patan etc mentioned in the novel are all historical places of Gujarat. In addition to this, the variety of weapons, war technique, use of palanquins, journey on horses, description of castles, gates, palaces etc mentioned in the novel reflect the essence of the atmosphere of the eleventh century Gujarat.

Conclusion

While presenting the political and cultural environment of the period, Munshi has presented

the scenic beauty of Gujarat in rainbow colours. The descriptions of gigantic mountains, sinuous rivers, flowing streams, high hills and soaring trees are abundantly found in the novel. Munshi's love for Gujarat is expressively exhibited in his minute descriptions of forts, castles and historical monuments in his trilogy. An aroma of self-esteem for the native land is incessantly experienced throughout his novels. Through historical novels, Munshi's intention was to recreate the magnificence and glory of Gujarat of the Solanki period.

Munshi evinces an intellectual integrity and imaginative vigor through the trilogy of historical novels penned by him. A scholar and devotee of ancient Indian culture, Munshi is replete with enthusiasm while expressing his affinity with his native land. He has skillfully presented the political intrigues, conspiracies, customs, superstitions and religious bearings of the people of Solanki age in his trilogy. His fascination for the scenic beauty and glory of Patan too finds reflection in his novels by his vivid descriptions of forts, rivers, mountains and grasslands. The jubilant manner in which people celebrated various festivals like Holi is presented awfully by Munshi. The great honour that was conferred on the victorious soldiers on their arrival at their home grounds is emphatically narrated by the novelist. It is evident that Munshi inventively suffused the historical facts with his extraordinary power of historical imagination that enticed a vast array of readers. Through his superb skill of narrating events, Munshi has presented through his trilogy, the political, cultural and social scenario of Gujarat in diverse shades.

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