

**Volume - V, Issue - V
July - 2017
ISSN : 2347 - 3592
Quality Impact Factor : 5.56**

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NSL/ISSN/INF/2013/2118

Dated: October 4, 2013

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K. M. MUNSHI'S PATAN NI PRABHUTA : A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The Present Paper focuses on Critical Study of Kanhaiyalal Maneklal Munshi's Patan ni Prabhuta. 'The Dominance of Patan', is the first of a series of Patan trilogy by Kanhaiyalal Maneklal Munshi in Gujarati. The central characters in the novel are Munjal Mehta, the prime minister of the Patan, King Karnadev Solanki who is on the death-bed in the starting of the novel, the queen Minaldevi, cunning Jain monk Anandsuri, Devprasad the alienated nephew of Karnadev, Tribhuvanpal, Devprasad's son and Jaydevkumar, King Karnadev and Minaldevi's son. Devprasad's wife Hansa and Tribhuvanpal's love Prasannmukhi, the niece of the queen play vital role in the novel.

Patan ni Prabhuta is a work of historical fiction, narrating the history of the Solanki monarchs of Gujarat, with Patan as their capital; this trilogy recreates the dominance of the Chalukya rulers of Gujarat. Fortunately, the original Gujarati novel, titled Patan ni Prabhuta, was published 100 years ago, while India was whirling under the bondage of the British rule. Munshi's writing style is without poetic embellishments, he allows the tale to do the talking. There are two characteristics stand out here: the significance to dialogues and the pace of actions. Munshi has created the characters through their dialogue rather than to give prolonged portrayals of the characters and settings in the novel. The action flows so interestingly that the reader worries he will lose the plot if he delays in turning the page! The theme of the novel is full of intrigue, schemes and counter-plots and breath-taking actions.

The central characters in the novel are Munjal Mehta, the prime minister of the Patan, King Karnadev Solanki who is on the death-bed in the starting of the novel, the queen Minaldevi, cunning Jain monk Anandsuri, Devprasad the alienated nephew of Karnadev, Tribhuvanpal, Devprasad's son and Jaydevkumar, King Karnadev and Minaldevi's son. Devprasad's wife Hansa and Tribhuvanpal's love Prasannmukhi, the niece of the queen play

vital role in the novel. The theme revolves around Patan, the Solanki's capital and the struggles of the queen to secure the throne for her son, the intrigues of Munjal Mehta to add the dominance of Patan and free it of its enemies, Anandasuri's fanatic passion to spread Jainism and to unite all the countries under that religion. The wily and smart Munjal Mehta is the central figure in the novel, as he maintains peace between warring parties and forms single authority at Patan. How he handles all the hurdles coming on his way makes the story more interesting.

The novel starts with Karnadeva, the King of Anahilavadi Patan who is on his deathbed. The atmosphere of the fort is full of intrigues, schemes and politics. The Jains who had played a vital role in the political and social life of Gujarat are busy scheming for consolidation of their power on the Royal fort of Patan. They had a long cherished dream of altering the kingdom of Patan into a Jain state, and now in the last days of the king, they find an opportunity of achieving that dream. The Rajput chiefs are anxious about the aggressive designs of the Jains and they are ready to fight to protect Patan anyhow.

Minaldevi, the Princess of Chandravati was attracted by the fascinating personality of Munjal before thirteen years, comes towards Patan from the South to marry with Karandev. She has been attracted to Munjal, the Chief Minister of Patan. So she gets married to Karandev, the king of Patan just to be close to him. Her marriage with the king Karandev is just of an adjustment than a love or source of contentment. When the king died of prolonged illness, his son Jayadevkumar is introduced as the King of Patan but the Crown Prince was too young to hold the rein of the State.

During these years Minaldevi had been just a puppet Queen who couldn't enjoy powers. But now she relishes the dream of becoming a Queen adoring the unrestrained power. She thinks that her time has come to make her dreams come true. She considers Munjal Mehta, the Chief Minister was an obstacle in the accomplishment of her dream. At this time Anandsuri, a Jain monk, comes with the passion of spreading Jainism as a State-religion in Patan and whole of Gujarat and Minaldevi yields to his trickery. Anandsuri quickly wins Minaldevi's favour through his diplomacy and priest craft.

On the other side, Munjal, the Chief Minister and a protector of the kingdom of Patan, understands Anandsuri's cunningness and fraudulence. He therefore recognizes him well at the very first meeting. But Anandsuri's only desire was to expel Munjal from his power. If he can convince just to Minaldevi, Anandsuri may expand the flag of Lord Mahavir in all of Gujarat. Anandsuri influences Minaldevi the importance of zeal in politics. He strongly suggests Minaldevi to eliminate Munjal from his post of Chief Minister of Patan and immediately send him to Chandravati to deal with the Jains. Minaldevi seems confused all the while.

Devprasad, the son of Karnadeva's step brother and the chief feudal, arrives to pay his last respects to the dying Karnadev. He tells his son, Tribhuvan, the tragic story of his marriage with Hansa, the sister of Munjal, and tells him how inexplicably she was taken away from him and restricted in the fort of Patan all these years by Minaldevi with Munjal. The young Tribhuvan goes to his maternal uncle Munjal Mehta to liberate his mother from Minaldevi but all in vain.

Karnadeva dies and the locks of troublemaking forces are opened. Munjal's fruitful leadership can lead to a peaceful consolidation of the people of all castes. But when Minaldevi

strikes him at the root of his policy, he gets very disturbed mentally. The plan formulated by Anandsuri, cunning monk is put through to the sheer wonder and dismay of the people of the Patan. Minal cast-offs the guidance of Munjal and sends him to fight with the king of Malwa. The plan to arrest Devprasad fails as he escapes and meets Munjal outside Patan. This annoys Minal a lot. She releases Hansa, Deviprasad's wife whom she had confined in the palace for many years on the condition that she would hold up her husband's march in Patan. Fighting with Jayadeva, Hansa's son Tribhuvan is wounded and is about to be killed by some of their soldiers. Minal puts a condition before Hansa that Tribhuvan will live only if she fulfils Minaldevi's wish to go to Devprasad and stop him from attacking Patan. Hansa agrees with her just for the safety of her son. Parting unconscious Tribhuvan in the care of Prasanna, she goes to meet her husband whom she had not seen for years together. Devprasad was thinking of joining hands with Munjal and then to attack on Patan. But as per the plan by Minal, Hansa goes to meet Devprasad. A sudden breeze of love overpowers them. This results in postponing the march to Patan. Devprasad fails to meet Munjal at a pre-planned place.

Minaldevi leaves Patan for Chandravati with Anandsuri to get the full support for her cause. On the way, they chance to meet Munjal. Minaldevi get furious and scolds him in harsh and bitter words. But Munjal re-mains calm. In lofty contempt, he throws his weapons to the ground and yields to be a prisoner of Minaldevi and Anandsuri. It seems like Minal got a victory. But on the other side Patan was without its ruler. The voice of citizens of Patan has been silenced for a while; people are vexed at Minal's actions and organize themselves to fight with her when she returns. The romance of Tribhuvan and Prasanna is well advanced. In the eyes of people of Patan, Minaldevi has spoiled the prestige of Patan.

Anandsuri makes an evil plan. Unsympathetically he sets fire to the palace where Devprasad and Hansa are sleeping in Rudramahlay. Swamped in the wild fire, they jump from the terrace into the river flowing below. Anandsuri follows them till Devprasad gets exhausted and dies along with Hansa in his arms. Tribhuvan gets shocked and decides to revenge by getting the tragic news of the death of his parents. The people of Patan are enraged that their queen-mother should have intrigued at such a brutal crime.

Minaldevi comes back to Patan and camps outside the Champaneri Gate. Morarpal brings the news to her that Tribhuvan is the master of Patan now. Minal devises a deceitful plan to overcome this problem. She sends message for Prasanna to meet her and requests her to convince her lover, Tribhuvan for a settlement. Minaldevi plays skilfully in perusing to Prasanna. But Prasanna doesn't get convinced easily first. Recognizing that Prasanna cannot be persuaded, Minaldevi returns disappointed. She realizes that intoxicated by the lust of power, she has gone so far in her frantic adventure. She thinks that the well-being of Patan is only in the hands of Munjal. Her depressed heart now starts longing for Munjal. The romance of sixteen years back is reborn.

Then there comes a scene which is the best piece of art by Munshi in this novel. Munjal comes with the same authentic marks of splendour. Minaldevi breaks into a passionate appeal for forgiveness for all that had happened during those days. Her pathetic request melts the heart of Munjal, and he gets ready to convince his nephew just for the glory of Patan.

Minaldevi is quite changed now. She takes an oath to live or die for Patan. Anandsuri is dismissed from his post though he continues to nurture his fantastic dream! Munjal goes to Patan, meets his nephew and wins his heart to get convinced for the sake of Patan itself. Prasanna tells Tribhuvan that his vow is abundantly fulfilled. Then they get married and devote themselves to the glory of Patan. Minaldevi is again the ruler of Patan. Munjal, though victorious, desires to go on pilgrimage. Minaldevi influences him that he should not run away from his duty; that Patan will be orphaned if he will leave at such a critical time. Gujarat needs him and Minal too.

The ray of hope and joy emerges in Patan. With the loud proclamation by the citizens of Patan yelling of "Jaya Somnath", Jayadeva ascends the throne. Tribhuvan becomes the Lord Protector. It is now the task of Munjal to vitalize the country, rouse its will, enliven its energies and inspire its political views with a new passion. He emerges as an architect of growing Gujarat.

Kanailal Munshi is a man of imposing dreams who has worked with literature as a means of self-expression and imparts liveliness and strength to the novel by depiction of multicolored characters.

Munshi through the vivid interaction of plot and actions presents the variety of men and women - old and young, good and wicked, wise and unwise, somber and light-hearted characters play their roles in the of the dominance of Gujarat. Munshi himself admits that his novels depict the realistic and practical kind of life, the life that is lived by all. His novel gives a true picture of the motley aspects of the society. Moreover, Munshi is basically a story writer, not a moralist. The novels of the French novelist Alexander Dumas had a great influence on the mind of Munshi which resulted in the creation of variety of human beings in his novels which are made up of flesh and blood who feel, enjoy and live life at its fullest. He used his art of highest imagination in depicting different characters - a mixture of historical and imaginary characters while writing his novel. Munshi always wanted to be successful in life by all the ways.

The key character of Munshi's Novel Patan ni Prabhuta is neither the Queen Minaldevi nor Jaysingh, but the Chief Minister Munjal Mehta.

Munshi himself contends,

“ My principal effort has always been to restrict myself to painting human beings; not saints, not the conventional dummies so beloved of prudes and schoolmasters nor pale abstractions; but full-blooded men and women who love and fight and sin and struggle in actual life. My practical concern has always been with the real drama of life, neither theories of life nor moral...”

Language and Diction in Munshi's novel Patan ni Prabhuta

Kanaiyalal Munshi is a creative and distinctive story teller. His style is of writing fiction is dynamic and flowing. Honesty, openness, lucidness and conciseness are the main features of Munshi's style of writing novel. His use of Sanskrit words into his novels establishes his natural style of writing; Munshi never uses useless embellished words to make the language more

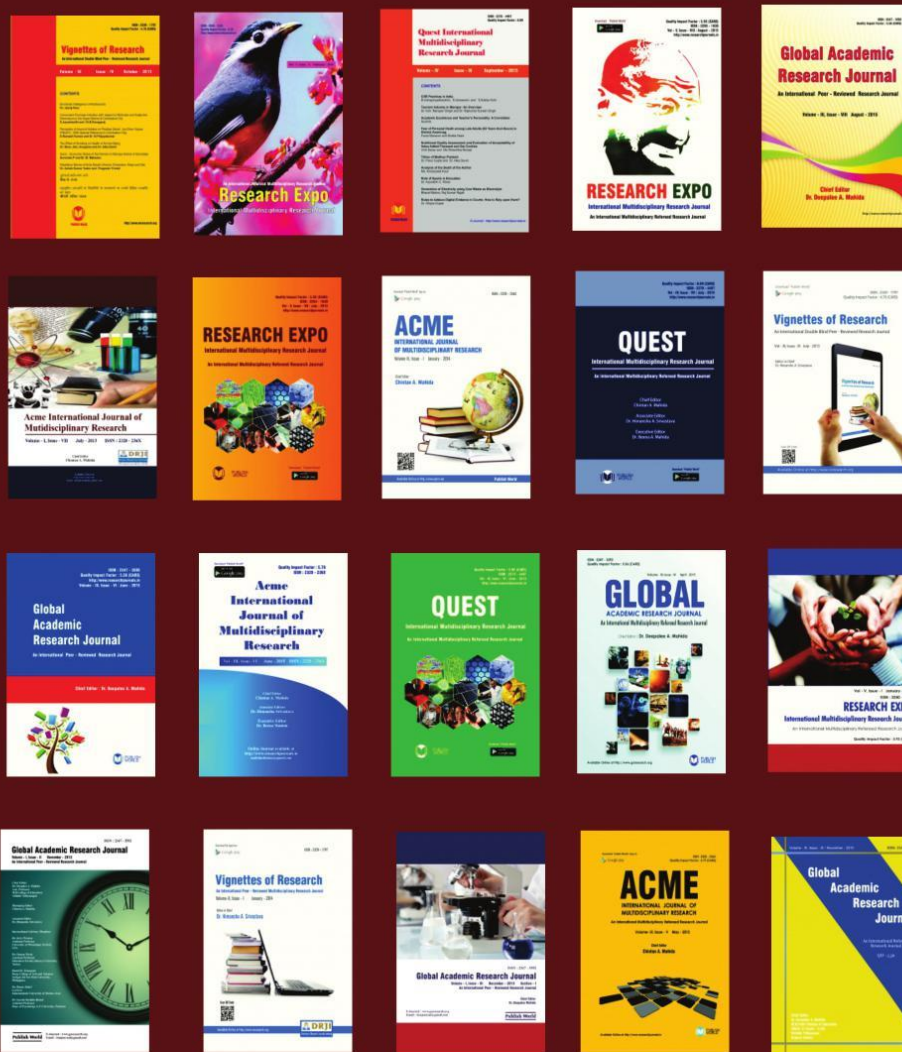
scholarly. In the portrayal of nature and in the description of internal struggle of the characters, Munshi's aim has always remained to produce a lasting effect on the minds of the readers. His portrayals are short, however expressive.

Munshi's skill of dialogue writing is exemplary in nature. The interesting and elegant flow of his language tempts the readers towards reading of his novels. The narrative of the zealous internal struggle of the characters between morality and immorality and their emerging out triumphant by winning over their own desires is creative.

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