

The Rise of Gujarati Novel in the 19th Century

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at the dawn of Gujarati novel. It is very clearly seen that it is due to English literature that Gujarati novel took birth, grew up and rose up to a remarkable height. What helped to bring in the existence and development of English novel the same kind of factors are also responsible for Gujarati novel. It could be divided into two phases. The first one indicates the birth and the other the development and fruits. The English novelists have made deep impression and so 'Yamuna Paryatan' comes out which is a crude form. Mahipatram took inspiration from this work and wrote 'Sasu Vahuni Ladai'. It was not very much interesting but shows the development as it is in 'Karanghelo' by Nandshankar Mehta-the novel in its true shape. Being a historical work many such types of novels followed. The second phase begins with the publication of 'Sarasvatichandra' by Govardhan Tripathi. One more remarkable novel 'Bhadrambhadrā' was written by Ramanlal Nilkanth. These works imbibe contemporary picture of Indian life. The forty year Gujarati novel journey provided excellent models to be followed by the next generation writers.

Key words : Gujarati novel, birth, development, 'Karanghelo', 'Sarasvatichandra.'

The 19th century is the dawn of Gujarati prose as well as of novel. Yet last forty years of this century are remarkable for its birth, growth and maturity. Gujarati novel begins with the publication of Nandshanker Mehta's 'Karanghelo' in 1866 and the period ends with a landmark of Govardhanram's 'Sarasvatichandra' in 1900. This paper attributes the rise and development of Gujarati novel in the 19th century.

Variety of prose existed in the 19th century in the form of આચ્યાન - Narratives, પુણી Essay, ચરિત્ર - Biographical sketches, and પદ્માત્મ Stories in verse. But the lack of education created nothing concrete. Day to day prose was used in practical dealings yet

no one had tried to use it in any serious prose from Gujarati literature. Gujarati literature considers this century as the modern age. Dalpatram and Narmad are considered the pioneers of it. Life was changing all the way. New schools, printing press, newspapers, railways, telegraph began to take place in daily life and gradually the life settled accordingly. (1). Moreover the industrialization and science also influenced the society. Printing presses had already been set up since 1800. Its direct influence could be seen in publications of various newspaper and journals. First Gujarati newspaper 'Mumbai Samachar' which was weekly, appeared in 1822. 'Buddhiprakash',

'Buddhivardhak', 'Satyaprakash' – the journals also followed. These newspapers and journals provided prose an opportunity to strengthen it. Add to this was university education after 1857 Sepoy Rising some of the universities were established in Mumbai, Kolkatta and Chennai. English language was the medium for learning. This was a turning point for Gujarati literature as well as for other Indian Languages. A new door opened for newly educated generation. These young learners in English literature found reflection of individual freedom and independence, love for nature, human values and the same they tried to bring in their writing. For Dalpatram and Narmad there was another side of life which was contemporary Gujarati life full of evils. They decided to be reformative and began to write on various ills of the time. " બાળલગ્નનો નો વિરોધ કન્યા કેળવજી, પરદેશગમ, દોટી રૂઢિ ઓ સામે પ્રહારો, વહેમ, ધર્મતર, ટૂચુકાં આદિને ભુદ્ધિવાદનો પડ કર – Child marriage, protest, educated women, going to abroad, attacks on wrong customs were intellectually challenged and all they became subjects.(2) For this strong expression was required and it was prose that could do. "It isn't that there wasn't prose in the middle age, but for literary creation only verse had basically remained a suitable medium but the new forms which came were prosaic ones. Source of inspiration was English so the belief that prose is the only demand for essays, novels and biography became stronger and stronger."(3)

That is how stage for the novel was set. In this regard Bholabhai Patel wrote that the things which were necessary for the beginning of the novel were achieved by – setting of up printing press, publication of newspapers and beginning of required prose for the same. (4)

There is no doubt that English learning brought the form of Gujarati novel. The name 'નવ,' in Gujarati is the direct descendent of English word 'Novel'. The English novel was already established in the 19th century when Gujarati was on the way. The English novel, too, took many years and the first one was 'Pamela' by Richardson, published in 1741 and was followed by 'Josephs Andrews' by Fielding. Then the whole 19th century became the Age of Novel. Ours is very late in this regard but it's the same for both the languages. I mean to say that before 'Pamela' there is also a long period for the formation of English novel. It goes back to 16th century, where 'Lylly's , 'Euphues', 'Sidney's 'Arcadia', Nashe's 'The Unfortunate Traveler' and Lodge's ' Rosalynde' possessed some elements of the novel.

Gujarati novel in 19th century could be placed into two phases. First one is the period from 1862 to 1887 and the other is of 1888 to 1900. The first one is much influenced by the translation, allegorical stories and romances. Bunyan's novel "Pilgrim's Progress" has many Indian

versions. Except Gujarati many languages adopted the story. ‘યમુના પર્યટન’ is considered the first ever Indian novel published in 1857. Baba Padamji discussed many issues related to women. There's no need to say that the work was also influence by ‘Pilgrim's Progress’. After five years of ‘યમુના પર્યટન’, novel like work in Gujarati appeared in 1862. Sorabasha Munsaf wrote “ દિનુસ્તાન મધ્યે તું જુપ્પું ” “The novel of few events and characters could be considered only as a “Long Short Story” because it has no long span that is expected for a novel. Moreover it has a very simple, lucid plot construction and isn't creative but an imitation of an English work.”(5)

Mahipatram comes out with “work which was directly related to women issues such reflected in ‘Yamuna Paryatan’. Actually this very novel provided Mahipatram an idea to write such kind of a work. ‘Sasu Vahuni Ladai’ was brought out in 1866. But this work can't be called as novel as it was more or less a translation of French novel. But Mahipatram was the first person who used Gujarati prose for a story. Presently it may appear dry to us but it is worthwhile and significant for the prose development. (6)

The aim of the novelist was to narrate a simple story of a woman belonging to a good Hindu family of the contemporary time. Quarrels between the wife and mother in law are at the centre. Through the story the novelist wanted to depict misery of a woman

and show us with wide open eyes how badly women were treated.

Later on in this category Nandashanker Mehta adds a work which is closely associated with the English Romance. It was the year 1866 that presented ‘Karanghelo’ first ever Gujarati novel in its real sense, and with this there's a beginning of Gujarati novel. It follows the pattern of English novelist Lytton. The subtitle “The Last of the Rajput Kings of Gujarat- A Novel is also its indication an is confirmed by Bholabhai Patel. (7) Gujarati was not only language which was influenced by Romance. Before ‘Karanghelo’s publication,, Bankimchandra’s first novel “Durgeshnandini” had appeared in 1865 which is believed to be based on sir Walter Scott’s novel ‘Ivanhoe’. ‘Karanghelo’ depicts important happenings of the Rajput King Karan. Strong narration and imaginative power, interesting subject as well as romantic atmosphere made the novel popular. Yet subplots, long dialogues, dryness toward the end, no compact plot, no development of characters all this bar the interest. But it must be remembered that “When Gujarati prose was treading like a child it must be noted that Nandkishor contributed such a good prose. Graceful, picturesque, imaginative, lucid prose descended in Gujarati literature for the first time. He made stylistic characteristic of Burke, Gibbon and Macaulay his own and created this prose.”(8)

After 'Karanghelo' there came the form of the historical novel. (9) Plenty of Bengali, French and English translated novels, historical, social and philosophical novels and romances began to come one after another. Anantprasad Vaishanav, Chaganlal Modi, Atmaram Trivedi, Manilal Bhatt, A.K. Vakil, D.P.Dave, G.S. Dwivedi, Narayan Hemchandra, Hargovind Kantawala, Manilal Dwivedi are some of the novelists of this period. Parsi novelists also contributed very much but they lacked artistic insight and aimed to please only Parsi audience yet Jehangir Taliarkhan, Kekhusto Kabraji, Dadi Taraporewala made efforts to bring in the real touch of novel. Only 'Mundla and Kulin' (1884) by Jahangir Taliarkhan is note worthy.

Second phase of Gujarati novel begins with the publication of Govardhan Tripathi's novel 'Sarasvatichandra' in 1887. It is written in four volumes. The first one appears after two decades of 'Karanghelo' publication. Sarasvatichandra is the master piece of Gujarati literature and with it our Gujarati novel knocked at the Literary World.(10)

Govardhanram took nearly fifteen years to complete the novel as the last volume comes out in 1900. It is a mega novel where we find the reflection of contemporary social, political life with an idealistic attitude. This was the time 1875 to 1885 of social, political and educational awakening – the transitional phase. After 1857 Sepoy

Revolution the new educated generation found interest in nationalism. They tried to see how the nation could proceed on the path of prosperity. Govardhanram no doubt has all these things in his mind. He blends two ends together – practical life and philosophical vision. (11)

That's why Vijairay Vaidya – a Gujarati critic called the novel as a cultural tale in the form of love story, while for Umashankar Joshi – a great Gujarati poet, Considered it: The poem of the age took birth in the shape of 'Sarasvatichandra'. "The hero of the novel 'Sarasvatichandra' is a formation of all such things. He is the representative of his time but he's not type. His individuality marks the novel. The characters, male or female, are supreme delineation which could be compared with Shakespeare's or Dante's. Though there are many stories they are related to main action so the complaint of the novel's artistic formation should be dismissed here. The novelist's concern of the form could be seen in his own words: "It is however certain and higher the class of novelists never fail to recognize and claim that the functions of the novel are more numerous, higher, and more sacred than the more pandering to the taste of the novel reading public". (12)

Before 'Sarasvatichandra' there wasn't a single novel which depicted the prose-rhythm in such a wonderful way. That's why 'Sarasvatichandra' is a classical, graceful, epical novel of Gujarati literature. It

has also remained a unique one in Indian writing.

When the last volume of 'Sarasvaticandra' was published in 1900 another remarkable novel 'Bhadram Bhadra' came out in the same year. Ramanlal Nilkanth's this novel was based on seventies famous work 'Don Quixote'. Like Don and Sancho, the protagonist Ambaram wanders in Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The novelist aimed to ridicule the ills of contemporary time which makes it entertaining as well as satirical. Good narration, speech variation, mixed language become helpful to create humour. He became only a good and one satirist who got fame in this regard.

During the second phase Amrit Keshav's 'M.A. બનાકે કયું મેરી ભિંડી ખરાબ કી' is one of the important novels. Narayan Thakker wrote many historical novels. 'Sarasvaticandra' influence continued on the novel till K. M. Munshi's arrival in 1915.

Thus the journey of 40 years of Gujarati novel is impressive. The period is notable as three milestones – 'Karnghelo', 'Sarasvaticandra' and 'Bhadram Bhadra' – are achieved. But it is regretful that outside Gujarat, importance of 'Sarasvaticandra' and that way of Gujarati novel hasn't been

recognized as in the 19th century there wasn't any great work of literature in the Indian languages. Only Gora by Rabindranath Tagore could be matched with it, but that too appeared in 1910.

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It is our choices...that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.

- J. K. Rowling

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