Chapter 2

The Historical Novel: Its Concept and its Development in English and Gujarati Literature
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2.1 Concept of the Historical Novel

The term *Historical Novel* is a widely used expression found in literature of all the languages. At times a close association of historical novel with that of history evolves many issues for the novelists of historical writings. The historical novelist is often criticised for making glaring alterations in the facts of history thereby reducing the majesty and solemnity of the historical novel. But it is imperative for the reader to take the historical novel in its right connotation and agree with the novelist that his purpose in writing the historical novel is not to display the facts of history but through his imagination, weave a plot around the historical incidents and historical personages bringing out something interesting, appealing and attention-catching for the reader.

The historical novel has a definite educative value; it aims to present how the past can throw light on the problems of today. Knowledge of national history through historical novels can lead to political consciousness. But in spite of the fundamental difference between history and historical novel in the approach to the past, there is an intimate connection between them. History is based on facts, while the historical novel is based on imagination. Both deal with the
deeds of men and women and show how human nature acts under the con-
straints of time and circumstances. Various critics have attempted definitions of
historical novel, though all agree that it is an imaginative reconstruction of the
past depicting the life and manners of a bygone age. According to The Concise
Oxford Dictionary of Literary Term,

“The Historical Novel is a novel in which the action takes place dur-
ing a specific historical period well before the time of writing (often
one or two generations before, sometimes several centuries), and
in which some attempt is made to depict accurately the customs
and mentality of the period.  

According to M.H. Abrams,

“The historical novel takes its setting and some of its characters and
events from history; the term is usually applied only if the historical
milieu and events are fairly elaborately developed and important to
the central narrative.”

E.A. Baker opines that,

“To present and interpret facts is the historian's business; to
summon up a past epoch, to show men and women alive in it and
behaving as they must have behaved in the circumstances, is the
labour and joy of the genuine historical novelist.”

According to Stoddard,

“A historical novel is a record of individual life, of individual emotion
in circumstances and lives of historical interest.”

London: Humphrey Toulmin, 1930 is of view that,

“Historical fiction deals imaginatively with the past and can follow
paths where Trespass Boards confront the pedestrian historian.
The novelist has a wider range; he may set foot in the preserves
of history, but on one condition: he may not make his habitation
there, or may build if part of his house stands within the demesne
of the imagination”

Goodman believes that,
“The aim of the novelist is not merely to put life into the dry bones of history, to resuscitate a bygone age, to rehabilitate an old scene with living beings, to recapture the atmosphere and the spirit of a period, but to show the heart of man.  

2.1.1 The Need of the Historical Novel

The need of the historical novel arises from the expectation of a common man for recreation through reconstruction of past. History is the outcome of investigation, research, documentation and statistics which by its very nature does not touch the human heart. It in fact does not succeed to attract the average reader. According to Adam Smith,

“Acquaintance with formal history is like the visit of a prince to a foreign land where he meets courtiers, sees public places and national monuments but does not observe the ordinary man in the ordinary business. A true history is a criticism of national life and not a dynastic romance.

2.2 Characteristics of Historical Novel

2.2.1 Historical Novel Different from History

Historical Novel is one of the important branches of fiction which has been attempted upon by various novelists in almost all the languages. It has finally been established as a literary form and an important adjunct to the study of history. Though there is a basic and elemental difference between history and the historical novel with regard to their approach, yet a close connection between the two cannot be negated. History, as Aristotle says, ‘deals with the particular’ where as fiction deals with the universal. Moreover, in history there cannot be any break-away from facts; fiction on the other hand, is based on imagination.

History is a record of facts, investigations and researches made by erudite scholars plunging their heads in moth-eaten, dog-eared documents. The historian, in his search for the truth of history, is likely to miss the life of the common
man and the impulse and emotion governed by the feelings of the people living at a particular time. In order to have a clear and genuine picture of the times of the past, one is inclined to move from the pages of history and turn to the pages of a historical novel in which life is vividly represented by the novelist in an exciting, thrilling and interesting manner. It is expected of a historical novelist to represent the ways, manners and customs of the past with a buoyant imagination. The historical novel therefore is a novel of manners as a contemporary might have written in a language comprehensible to the people of his times. The historian in fact supplies the metal but the novelist supplies the mould and frequently gives a wrench or a twist to adjust the drama of history to the social drama of man.

2.2.2 Fertile Imagination: Necessary for Historical Novelist

It is essential that the historical novelist is endowed with an astute imagination to recreate the past and enliven the dry facts of history by transforming them into something extremely fascinating, interesting and exciting. It is imperative for a historical novelist that he is endowed with a wide knowledge of history and a romantic interest in the past; he has mastery over the art of story-telling and is replete with historical imagination. The historical novel must breathe the spirit of history along with the knowledge and appreciation of the importance of life of an individual.

The historical novelist must re-live the past so that he may be able to recreate the past with reliability and faithfulness. The mind of the historical novelist needs to be a storehouse of all the necessary information regarding the past. He should have such a mind that is full of memories of the manners, customs, social conditions and sentiments of a particular period. In other words, the historical novelists should have a sound historical data of the period he wishes to depict in his novels. Moreover regarding the choice of period, the historical novelist should select such an age with which he is familiar and which he has mastered by close study of its ways and manners of living. The motive of the historical novelist must be to revive the national glory by means of his novels.
2.2.3 The Extent to Which the Facts of History Could be Distorted

Regarding how far a historical novelist should distort the facts of history for purposes of the novel, it could be said that since the historical novelist is not expected to be a historian, he can present historical facts with imagination suiting the purposes of his story. But he needs to take care should that he does not distort facts in such a manner that a false representation of history is given to the readers. Characters of historical significance need to be presented as they were, without painting them with vices which they never had, or glorifying them with virtues which they never possessed. The prejudices of the writer have to be put aside while delineating historical characters.

2.2.4 Imaginary Characters Play the Pivotal Roles in the Historical Novel

The historical novelist presents an artist's view of a thing and not a photograph. There is a good deal of transmutation and recasting of incidents and introduction of imaginary characters. The historical novelist intends to recreate the spirit of the time he presents, not objectively but subjectively. Goodman rightly observes, “The historical novel acts like a prism and by breaking up history, it shows the colours of life.”

As regards the real historical persons and incidents, the historical novelist gives subordinate position to them and provides a prominent place to the characters of the imagination because the chief aim of the historical novelist is the interpretation of human character. Real historical characters are moved to the background and characters of fiction are brought to the foreground. The hero usually is an imaginary individual who has felt life more intensely and gained more experience than others, and is in some way connected with historical events. Actual facts of history are blended with stories of love and war in order to display the human nature and the complexities of life. The historical characters are not altogether omitted because they help to give the novel a historical interest or a setting.
2.2.5 Language Used By the Historical Novelist

As far as the language is concerned, the historical novelist should use the language of the present times. He should not be fastidious regarding the use of obsolete and archaic language in the representation of the past; he must use the language that is understood by the people of his own times. The historical novelist should reject antiquarian realism and over-accuracy, and adopt a language resembling to common speech. But he needs to take care that he uses the language heightened with poetry with just enough of archaism to create an illusion of the past.

2.3 The Development of Historical Novel in English Literature

Before the eighteenth century, no distinction was made by the writers between history and fiction, yet attempts were made in writing novels having some picture or blend of history. However, the writers were more inclined towards romance than history. Horace Walpole's (1717-1797) The Castle of Otranto (1764), though a Gothic romance and a tale of supernatural horror, deals with a period that is sufficiently remote. He was followed by Clara Reeve (1729-1807) whose Old English Baron (1777), William Beckford's Oriental (1759-1844) romance Vathek (1787), Mrs. Anne Radcliffe's (1764-1823) three novels Romance of the Forest (1791), The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and The Italian (1797) enjoyed extraordinary popularity in those days. But none of these novelists possessed any feeling for historical realism. Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe had aimed at the illusion of antiquity with fair success, but had avoided explicit historical allusions and refrained from introducing well-known historical personages or, in fact, any personages known to history at all. Some others, who did so, violated all sense of history. To take some instances, Miss Sophia Lee's (1750-1824) Recess (1783) and Harriet (Sophia Lee's sister) and Sophia Lee's Canterbury Tales (1797) outraged history by introducing fantastic concoctions in the garb of true historical events. Jane Porter (1776-1850) achieved some kind of distinction in his Scottish Chiefs (1810). It had all the qualities of a good historical novel except the life, the humour and the genuine romance, all that Scott had. E. A. Baker rightly
Before the nineteenth century, proper historical novels were not written because there was no difference between the history and fiction. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the difference between the two was clearly understood. The fact cannot be negated that in the eighteenth century, great historians like Nisbon, Hume and Clarendon taught the world the real significance of history, and the novel came into existence as a separate species of literature during this age. The American War of Independence (1775-1782) and the French Revolution (1789) gave birth to the historical novel because both these happenings gave an opportunity for assertion of the individual rights.

### 2.3.1 Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Sir Walter Scott, Scottish novelist (1771-1832) appeared as a great Historical novelist during this period. He is often considered to be the inventor and the greatest practitioner of the historical novel. "He is called the father of both the Regional and the Historical Novel in English Literature". This is because he imparted to the historical novel, a proper form and shape.

The novel of terror, by its grotesque themes and creaking artifices had brought novel reading into disrepute. It was Walter Scott who set the novel on its feet again. He inculcated in the contemporary, the interest in the romantic past through his splendid gift of imagination and gave a new bent to the historical novel. In the pages of his books, the past lived again in glowing but credible colours.

Some credit, however, must be given to Scott's immediate predecessor, Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), the Irish writer, whose work somewhat resembled his, except in the larger attributes of genius. In a lesser way, what she did for the Irish, Scott was to do for the Scots. David Daiches rightly remarks,
“We find in the work of Walter Scott (1771-1832) a deep sense of Scottish history and nationhood as well as an attitude to the past and the present which derives from a peculiarly Scottish experience and colors his best novels.

In developing the form beyond the fantastic excesses of the Gothic and beyond the embryonic shape moulded by Maria Edgeworth, Scott effectively created the nineteenth-century historical novel. Regarding his contribution to the Historical novel, Una Pope-Hennesy remarks,

“Sir Walter Scott occupies a highly important niche in our temple of literature, for, as prime architect of the popular historical romance, he initiated a new era in story-telling… . For him the past, often by virtue of some chance revelation or contact, ceased to be the past, and became in his consciousness as immediate as the present. From inanimate things, he involuntarily drew life, passion, romantic visions, the actual vibration of events. For him dry bones re-assembled themselves and became clothed in flesh and rubble reconstituted itself into settings for pageantry. Automatically in him the past was re-born, re-animated, re-realized, and ceased in any dry-as-dust sense to be history.

His historical novels changed attitudes towards the past, he made the world aware of Scotland, his novels struck the reader with their epic quality.

2.3.2 The Historical Novel after Scott

Since Scott, the historical novel has flourished to a great extent in England. Almost every great English novelist has contributed by writing one or two historical novels. He taught history to his countrymen in entertaining form, and redeemed novel –reading from the charge of being a useless waste of time. It is significant that for many years the historical background was a requirement of the highest fiction and drama. Many English novelists of the century- Bulwer Lytton, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Kingsley, Charles Reade, George Eliot- aspired to write at least one masterpiece in the historical form.

Commenting on Scott's historical novel, Lovett and Hughes observe in The History of the Novel in England,
“Scott exercised on European fiction the influence to which only that of Richardson and Dickens can be compared... Most exact scholarship came from Germany; more exciting use of romantic episode and dramatic situation from France, especially through the example of Dumas. The English historical novel in its latest development may, indeed, be regarded as a blending of Scott with continental influences.

The successors of Scott made a serious assessment of history and strove to remain truthful to the facts of history. In their hands, the treatment of history became more scientific than romantic. They concentrated on the life of common people, the society as a whole rather than focusing on a particular individual. The following are the successors of Scott who made the trend of historical novel alive in the following years.

William Harrison Ainsworth (1803-82)

William Harrison wrote some forty historical novels of which the best known are Toodwood, Jack Shepherd, The Tower of London, Old St. Paul’s and Lancashire Witches. Ainsworth's novels do not have subtle delineation of character, the diction of his heroes and heroines is often absurdly stilted; and he has little reverence for probability. Though his tales are frequently lurid and violent, they are written with gusto and energy. Ainsworth is too shoddy to be ranked as a first-rate novelist, but he certainly impressed upon many of his readers, who would otherwise have been unaware of the fact that there is such a subject as history. His novels are readable enough though contemporary critics found fault with him for his idealization of rogues.

George P.R. James's (1801-60)

James's novel Richelieu, A Tale of France (1829) bears a strong resemblance to Scott's novel Quentin Durward. It was his earliest novel and is by many considered to be his best novel. Others include Darnley, or the Field of the Cloth of Gold (1830), Delorme (1830), The Gipsy (1834) and Lord Montagu's Page (1858). George James has little power in dealing with the characters and has no imaginative
grasp of history. In style, he is pompous and monotonous, and his dialogue is stilted and formal. Criticizing Ainsworth, E. Albert remarks,

“He possesses little of Scott's genius, for his handling of historical material is crude and cavalier in the extreme. His brutal realism and crude sensationalism give his work a melodramatic effect similar to that of the Radcliffian horror novel.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Dickens writes of revolutionary France in A Tale of Two Cities and of a preceding age of English history in Barnaby Rudge. Barnaby Rudge fails as a historical novel whereas A Tale of Two Cities (1859) presents all the colour and pageantry of the French Revolution together with many memorable characters. Dickens had read Carlyle's French Revolution, and had been carried away by it. His intention was to tell such a story as would convey the effect that tremendous book had had upon himself.

William Thackeray (1811-1863)

Thackeray's novel Henry Esmond made further contribution by adding imaginative element to the historical events. Thackeray paints the life of the Eighteenth century in his novel Henry Esmond, the kings and generals, as well as the commoners, the writers and the coffee houses. He brings history down from the skies to the common Earth. Henry Esmond is the most perfect work in English fiction. It is a historical novel of great length and complexity. It presents a minute and accurate knowledge of the time of Queen Anne and an extraordinary faculty for reproducing both the style and the atmosphere of the period. The age of Queen Anne comes back to life in the pages of the novel. It has been remarked that the very style and diction have been modeled by Thackeray upon the eighteenth century prose of Addison and Steele. To quote William J. Long,

“...In a word, Thackeray gives us the 'back stairs' view of war, which is, as a rule, totally neglected in our histories... Both in style and in matter, therefore, Esmond deserves to rank as probably the best historical novel in our language.
George Eliot (1819 –1880)

George Eliot's novel *Romola* is the most interesting of her historical novels but it suffers from one grievous fault; it is not true to the people or even to the locality which it endeavours to represent. Referring to *Romola*, William J. Long observes,

“... One who reads it here, in a different land, thinks only of the story and of the novelist's power; but one who reads it on the spot which it describes, and amidst the life which it pictures, is continually haunted by the suggestion that George Eliot understood neither Italy nor the Italians. It is this lack of harmony with Italian life itself which caused Morris and Rossetti and even Browning with all his admiration for the author, to lay aside the book, unable to read it with pleasure or profit...

In a word, *Romola* is a great moral study and an extremely interesting book; but the characters are not Italian, and the novel as a whole lacks the strong reality which marks George Eliot's English studies. The story moves stiffly and there is musty odour of yellowed paper, libraries and museums about it. She may not be untrue to history, but she has failed to bring it to life.

Bulwer Lytton (1803-73)

In Bulwer Lytton (1803-73), we have another luminary of the historical novel. In the opinion of Cross, no historical novel has had so many readers as *The Last Days of Pompeii*. His four historical romances *Devereux* (1829) , *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) *Rienzi* (1835) and *Harold* (1848) prove his greatness as the historical novelist. He did not merely gather historical details to give romantic atmosphere to novels, but also attempted to reconstruct the history of the time completely and present that history in relation to individual life.

Others

Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* and *Hypatia*, Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* and *Hereward the Wake* are a few of the other great triumphs of the historical novel
after Scott. We have stirring visions of the Middle Ages, Roman times and the
Elizabethan age in these bustling and colourful pages. Regarding contribution
to the English historical novel by Scott, Dumas and Thackeray, Bliss Perry re-
marks,

“Scott and Dumas made history the bondmaid of romance.
Bulwer made historical investigation the companion of romance;
Thackeray made history the master of romance. These are the
three of the evolution of the historical novel.

It could be said that there is a certain common meeting ground between history
and fiction, because we seldom know history truly, we only try to interpret it
according to our own lights. On the other hand, the novelist tries to paint life
and history, either of the past or of present times.

2.4 Modern Age

The modern age is essentially the age of the novel. Novels are written practi-
cally on all possible themes and subjects, e.g. the novel of social purpose (H.G.
Wells, Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, etc.), romance (Conrad, Kipling, Haggard,
Weyman, Maurice Hewlett, etc.), the regional novel (Arnold Bennett, Hardy,
Eden Philpotts), the romantic and sentimental novel (Barrie, Jan Maclearen,
S.R. Crockett, Gabriel Sentoun, etc.), the psychological novel (Henry James,
James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson), the detective novel (Wilkie
Collins, G.K. Chesterton, Edgar Wallace, Dorothy, L.Sayers, and Agatha Christie,
the spiritual novel (Charles Morgan), the biographical novel (H.G. Wells), famil-
y novels (Galsworthy and Arnold Bennett), scientific novel (H.G. Wells and
Huxley), satirical novels (D.H. Lawrence) and escapist novel (Norman Douglas,
Sylvia Townsend Warner, David Garnett, Walter Do La Mare, Stella Benson,
etc.). Though very few of the novelists of the modern age tried their hands on
writing historical novel, yet it has remained an attractive ideal for some of the
writers of the modern age. In all lands and climes, we find novelists tantalized
by the bait of history. Perhaps the greatest historical novel of all times was
Tolstoy's War and Peace. In Feuchtwanger's Jew Suss, Sienckjwiz's Quo Vadis,
Robert Graves's Claudius and Claudius the God and in Howard Fast's Citizen, Tom
Paine, Spartacus and Freedom Road, we have the names of a few most brilliant
venturers in this line. Among the twentieth century historical novelists may be mentioned Sir Arthur Quiller Couch's *Hetty Wesley* and *The Splendid Spur*, Jacob Wassermann's *The Triumph of Youth*, Ford Madox Hueffer's *The Fifth Queen*, Miss Phoebe Gay's *Vivandiere*, and quite a few others.

### 2.5 Development of the Historical Novel in Gujarati

The inception of Gujarati novel had its roots in English literature. The English ladies had great fascination for the historical novels of Walter Scott. The English officers ruling India wanted such historical novels to be written in the regional languages of India. They therefore inspired the Gujarati writers to experiment with this new genre. Therefore, following the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott, and at the instance of Mr. Russell, an Education Inspector under whom Nadashankar was working, the first Gujarati historical novel called *Karan Ghelo* was written by Nandashankar Tuljashankar Mehta in 1866. *Karan Ghelo* is the first historical romance in Gujarati. The novel is based on the incident of the fall of Karan Vaghelo, the last Hindu King of Gujarat, who because of his erratic nature was called Ghelo (mad) instead of Vaghelo (his family name). The success of the novel had led other writers to experiment with this genre. Being the first novel, Karan Ghelo suffers from many limitations. Though the subject of the novel is fascinating, yet lengthy descriptions in the novel, inartistic development of characters and unnatural dialogues hamper the total impact of the novel. In spite of all the discrepancies in the novel, *Karan Ghelo* is recognized as the first successful historical novel in Gujarati which due to its enormous success, was translated in Marathi as well.

#### 2.5.1 Nadashankar, Mahipatram Nilkanth (1829-1891)

Inspired by the indomitable success of Nadashankar, Mahipatram Nilkanth(1829-1891), a social reformer and a Government Officer in the Education Department and the writer of the first social novel *Sasu Vahu-ni Ladai* (*The quarrel between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law*) (1866), tried his hand at writing the historical novel. He gave to Gujarat two historical novels namely *Vanaraj Chavdo* (1881)
and Sadahra Jesang (Siddhartha Jayasinh) (1881), the novels of little literary merit.
After this, the historical novel Ranak Devi was written by Anantprasad Trikamal Vaishnav in its imitation. This novel of Anantprasad based on Siddharaj Jayasinh's life earned more popularity compared to the novel written by Mahipatram.

2.5.2 Jehangir Ardeshir Taleyarkhan (1846-1923)

Another novelist Jehangir Ardeshir Taleyarkhan (1846-1923), the then Commissioner of Police in Vadodara Government, wrote two novels Ratnalakshmi (1881) and Mudra Ane Kulin (Mudra and Kulin) (1810), influenced by the novels of Col. Medows Taylor. In Ratnalakshmi (1881) is narrated the picture of fear, horror and chaos prevailing during the reign of Nanasaheb whereas Mudra Ane Kulin narrates the story of the rise of Hyder Ali and the atrocities committed by him (Hyder Ali) and his son Tipu Sultan. Both the novels are well written. The characters are sharply drawn and the author's insight into human nature is evident everywhere. The popularity Taleyarkhan's novels enjoyed in the last two decades of the 19th century was amazing.

2.5.3 Ichchharam Desai (1853-1912)

Out of the several novels written by Ichchharam Desai (1853-1912), Ganga Ek Gurjar Varta, Hind ane Britannia and Chandrakant, in three parts are worth mentioning. Ganga Ek Gurjar Varta (1888) left such a deep and everlasting effect on its readers that Manilal Dwivedi included it in the list of 100 classics of Gujarati literature. Hind ane Britannia (1886) discusses the pros and cons of the British Administration of India on the basis of historical backgrounds of India and England. Some Anglo-Indian journalists smelt sedition in this and they raised a hue and cry to get the novelist arrested. But two Englishmen after reading the book themselves are said to have written privately to the Government saying that they found nothing seditious in the book. This book has also been translated into Marathi. Chandrakant, in three parts (1889; 1901; 1907), hardly a novel in any sense, had once sparked a controversy regarding its authorship. This novel has been translated into both Hindi and Marathi language. According to Jayana Sheth,
“Influenced by Western historical fiction, these writings had remained scholarly but stiff. Munshi made the historical novel vibrant with characters exuding vigour and life.

2.5.4 Govardhanram (1855-1907)

Govardhanram Madhavram Tripathi, a prolific reader of English and Sanskrit works, started writing in both the languages, English and Sanskrit from a very young age of 16.Govardhanram's articles in English cover many subjects: Sociology, Education, Economics, Politics, Science, History, Philosophy, Law etc. Of Govardhanram's writings in Gujarati, Saraswatichandra, Saksharjivan, the Life of the Late Sakhar Navalram Lakshmiran, Lilavat Jivankala and Kavi Dayaram no Akshardeha are well known books. Saraswatichandra, a novel in four parts is considered to be a masterpiece of Govardhanram. This novel is primarily a philosophical work with a blend of realism and idealism. Powerful dialogues and a long trail of vivid characters along with a distinctive style made it the most popular novel till the spell was broken by Munshi's first novel Ver ni Vasulat (Revenge Accomplished) in 1913.

2.5.5 K.M. Munshi (1887-1971)

Munshi, the most distinguished writer of Gujarati literature left the readers spell bound by writing historical novels depicting the grandeur of Gujarat. He was from the beginning, much concerned about the dwindling glory of Gujarat. It is said that Gujarat was Munshi's first love. In the first article he wrote in 1907, as a student, he shed tears over the vanished glories of Gujarat; in 1910, he highlighted the conquest of Somnath and also coined the word Gujarat-ni-asmita ‘Gujarat Consciousness' through his literary labours and by means of organizations, founded and managed by him. He concentrated on making Gujarat consciousness a living factor. “He enriched its literature and by his works of fiction and history gave it a background and a sense of continuity”

Munshi enriched Gujarati literature and contributed to the growth of Indian literature as a whole. His novels, plays, history, essays, speeches, biographies and autobiographies – all pooled together create a brilliant chapter of Indian literary
Munshi’s historical trilogy depicts consolidation of Gujarat in the days of the Chalukyan kings. Jaya Somanth and Bhagna Paduka deal with the fall of the Chalukyas. Though set in the past, the novels are realistic both in their relevance to the contemporary scene and in their portrayal of the fundamental human passions of love and power through life-like characters and intricate plots. The dead pages of Gujarat’s history become a real experience for the people through Munshi’s novels. The trilogy, providing heroic models, strongly appealed to the contemporary Gujaratis. Another historical novel, Prithvi Vallabh unfolds the story of the romantic lover and king. The story of Munj is probably the most popular novel of Munshi, even outside the purview of Gujarati literature. The book has been translated in various regional languages of India as well as in English language. It has also been staged and screened in Hindi.

During his life time, Munshi made noteworthy contributions in the fields of literature, art, religion, philosophy, education, journalism, politics, law, administration and social reforms along with various constructive programmes. He hailed in such a period when India was searching for an identity, fighting for freedom and was striving to become an independent nation. Jayana Sheth remarks, “Antithesis between the past and the present, antiquity and modernity, the East and the West seem to be inherent in this age of renaissance in India.” 19 Munshi’s subtle personality is reflected in most of the major fields of activity of his age, making him a representative figure of the Indian renaissance.

2.6 Munshi’s Contemporaries

Chunilal Vardhaman Shah (1887-1966), Narayan Visanji Thakur and Dahyabhai Ramchandra Mehta made serious efforts for writing historical novels. Chunilal was for nearly 35 years, an assistant editor of the Prajabanjdu a renowned weekly periodical published from Ahmedabad. Chunilal, under the pseudonym of “Sahityapriya” wrote in the literary column, which was looked upon with profound respect. Since 1907, he translated novels from English, Bengali and Marathi. Then looking at the enormous popularity of Narayan Visanji Thakur, he tried his hand on writing historical novels. The most noteworthy among his novels, over 50 in number include Karmayogi Rajeshwar, Roopmati and Jigar ane
Ami. His *Kantak-chhayo Panth (Thorn-laden path)*, an ambitious novel in four parts covers two great famines, two world wars and two great transfers of power—one from the East India Company to the British Crown, and the other from the British to the representatives of the people of India. Some of the characters in the novel are historical, while others are fictitious. Some of the places, likewise are real, some, legendary. The content of his novels is authentic, but because of the lack of genuine creative spark, the author could not create a single character that would captivate the imagination of the reader for any length of time. Mansukhlal Jhaveri remarks,

“\[quote\] The author's assessment of the native States, the British rule, its professions and practice, the socio-religious traditions etc. though given in the form of dialogues, fails to be integrated into the plot of the novel.\[quote\]

Chunilal who never took undue liberty with history in his historical novels, could not create sensation in the portrayal of his characters. Still, “If he has not scaled phenomenon heights, he has not sunk into quagmire either”

A connoisseur of literature, a creative writer Narayan Visanji Thakur made exemplary contribution in the field of historical novel. He has written the novels based on the history of Rajasthan, Kutch, Gujarat, Bengal and Maharashtra. He was well versed with the facts of history of these regions. He was an inexhaustible reader of the novels of English as well as the novels written in other regional languages. The most distinguishing characteristic of his novel writing is that he tried to remain truthful to the incidents of history.

“\[quote\] As far as the literary technique is concerned, he closely resembled the style of Walter Scott in placing a title to every chapter consisting of English, Sanskrit or Urdu poetic lines. Also like Scott, he presented a detailed description of the character, place, period, or the incident, but if minutely observed, he imitated the literary style of Reynold rather than Scott\[quote\]
2.7 The Historical Novel After Munshi

2.7.1 Ramanlal Desai (1892-1954)

Ramanlal Desai carried forward the trend of historical novel with his novels Bharello Agni (Burning Fire) (1953), Thag (Rogue) (1938), Kshitij (Horizon) (Part I, II (1938, 1941)), Pahad na Pushpo (Flowers of Mountain) (Part I, II (1943, 1949)), KalBhoj (1950), Shaurya Tarpan (Bravery Propitiated) (1951) and Bal Jogan (Child Ascetic) (1952). The publication of his novels in rapid succession for a whole decade led Ramanlal to the peak of popularity. In spite of Munshi's glamour, Ramanlal was a household name and his novels, as expected captured the market. His novels are woven round the life of an average well-educated Gujarati.

Comparing Ramanlal Desai with Munshi, Mansukhlal Jhaveri remarks,

"Munshi has largely written historical novels, Ramanlal has largely written social novels. Munshi has dazzling brilliance; Ramanlal has sweetness and gentility. Munshi's characters belong to the high and mighty past; Ramanlal's characters belong to the contemporary upper middle class. Munshi's heroines are proud and liberated; those of Ramanlal are lovely little things, models of suavity and charm. Munshi aspires to resuscitate the glory that was Gurjar Desha; Ramanlal provides a background of the major political and cultural currents prevailing in Gujarat of the Gandhian Era."

2.7.2 Dhoomketu (1892-1965)

Gaurishankar Govardhanram Joshi-known as 'Dhoomketu' contributed to Gujarati literature by writing twenty-nine historical novels. His chief novels include Chaula Devi (1940), Raj Sanyasi (Ascetic of the State) (1942), Barbarakjishnu: Jaysinh Siddharaj (1945), Tribhuvangand: Jaysinh Siddharaj (1946), Avantinath Jaysinh Siddharaj (1948), Gurjeshwar Kumarpal (1949), Nayikadevi (1951), Rai Karanghelo (1952), AjitBhimdev (1953), Chandragupta Maurya (1956), Samrat Chandragupta (1957), Priyadarshi Samrat Ashok (1958) and many others. Dhoomketu excelled in reflections charged with emotions, descriptions and visions of grandeur rather than concentrating on
characterization and the apt development of plot.

Munshi and Dhoomketu, both strove to recreate the magnificence and glory of Gujarat of the Solanki period. The pivotal characters of the most celebrated novels of both are not the kings of Gujarat, but their chief ministers who are mighty, intelligent and dedicated to the well-being and prosperity of Gujarat. Thus the reflections of Munshi’s writings are incessantly experienced in the novels of Dhoomketu. As Mansukhlal Jhaveri aptly observes,

“The power of Munshi lies in characterization; the power of Dhoomketu lies in emotionally charged reflections and lovely visions... Munshi’s historical novels are stories of great and extraordinary events of life of exceptionally great characters; Dhoomketu’s historical novels hardly go beyond the pail of good detective novels. Dhoomketu in sheer enthusiasm of singing the glory of Gujarat sometimes describes events that defeat the purpose.”

2.7.3 Jhaverchand Meghani (1897-1947)

Jhaverchand Meghani, popularly known as a poet of powerful sentiments, tried his hand at writing historical novels too. He wrote historical novels like Sama-rangan (1938), Sorath Taran Vahetan Pani, Ra Gangajaliyo (1939) and Gujarat-no Jay (Part I (1939), Part II (1942)). Comparing Meghani with Munshi, Mansukhlal Jhaveri comments,

“If Munshi’s major women characters are much-pampered adolescent daughters and Ramanlal Desai’s are charming beloved, then Meghani’s major women characters are models of Indian motherhood. Meghani excels in the portrayal of family life.”

Meghani has remained very close to history in his depiction of events in his historical novels. His novels reveal heroism, mystery, intrigues and romantic fervor. Meghani has made an effective use of the language and imparted to Gujarati literature varied, fresh and exquisite similes.
“His best prose, sometimes dancing playfully like a stream, sometimes flowing with the graceful majesty of a post-monsoon Ganga in the plains, draws sharply defined pen pictures and portraits and creates appropriate atmosphere.

2.7.4 Manubhai Rajaram Pancholi (Darshak)

Darshak contributed to historical novel by writing novels like Bandhan ane Mukti (Bondage and Liberation) (1939), Deepnirvana (1944) and Socrates (1974). His fascinating fusion of imaginary characters along with the real historical characters in the novels created a feeling of awe in the readers.

The trail of historical novel was further accelerated by Yashodhar Mehta with his trilogy Vahi jati Jhelam (Continuously Flowing Jhelam) (1955), Tunghanth (1957) and Mohammed Gazni (1966) based on the history of Kashmir. The contribution of Chunilal Dhami and his son Vimalkumar Chunilal Dhami is also significant who based their novels on Jain literature. The modern age witnessed the upsurge of the novelist of a very high stature, Raghuvir Chaudhary who gave to Gujarat the historical novels like Venu Vatsala (1972), Rudra Mahalaya (1978) and Somatirth (1996). Mohanlal Patel's Antimdeep (The Last Light) (1960), and Lancchan (Stigma) (1997) along with Pannalal Patel's Galalsingh (1972) furthered the trend of historical novel in the postmodern age. The contribution of Chandrakant Bakshi with his novels Anayrnut (1972) and Atitvan (1974) is also remarkable.

It is certain that in spite of the voluminous creation of historical novels in the modern and postmodern age, its popularity shows a downward trend with the passage of time. The mindset of people has completely changed in this age. The element of social struggle which was evident in the novels of the past has undergone rapid transformation. The social structure has destabilized due to proliferous outburst of science and technology. It has resulted in the obliteration of self-esteem of the people. A well-known poet and critic Suresh Joshi remarks,

“...The notion of art in accordance with the artist has been changing from era to era. Govardhanram had one ideology; whereas Munshi had another. Moreover, Ramanlal, Pannalal and others possessed a discreet ideology, different from their predecessors.

Thus the novel form developed, though at a slow pace, but certainly attained
the peak of growth and in turn gave birth to different kinds of novels.

Analyzing the entire trail of the historical novel, it is evident that the historical novel originated in the year 1866. Gradually passing through the period of Renaissance, Pundit Yuga, Gandhi Yuga, Post Gandhi Yuga, Modern Age and Postmodern Age, it attained a significant place in Gujarati literature. It is clearly evident that, passing through different eras, it underwent transformation in the hands of various creative artists and established the supremacy of historical novel to other forms of literature.

2.8 Final Outcome

In spite of the amazing success of historical period over a period of time, the novelist, be it English or Gujarati, continuously tosses between historical facts and imaginative elements. The historical novel comprises of the descriptions of royal intrigues, mysterious tunnels, secret consultations, statesmanship of ministers and their heroism, invasion of states, incidents of bravery, duty of a Kshatriya (Kshatradharma), duty of a Brahmin (Brahmadharma), brilliant heroes and radiant heroines, brave warriors, dancers, stately conflicts to impress beautiful women and the princes falling in love with the dancers. Still one has to accept the fact that the historical novels have to a great extent made us aware of the glorious past of the country by throwing light on the significant events of history.

References


7. Ibid., p. 205.

8. Ibid., p. 205.


12. Ibid., pp. 203-204.


15. Ibid., p. 406.

16. Ibid., p. 209.


25. Ibid., p. 176.

26. Ibid., p. 176.