


The Wrath of an Emperor

Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi

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Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi's versatility and achievements were in a way unique. He was an eminent lawyer, one of the framers of India's Constitution and a seasoned statesman.

Coming under the inspiring influence of Sri Aurobindo during his student days, Munshi had been an ardent fighter for India's freedom, working at different stages in close association with Jinnah, Tilak, Besant, Mahatma

Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Rajagopalachari and Pandit Nehru.

His achievements as Home Minister of Bombay in 1937, as India's Agent-General in Hyderabad before the Police action, as India's Food Minister and as Governor of Uttar Pradesh had been characterised by rare courage and decisive energy.

Acknowledged as the foremost writer in modern

Gujarati literature, he has to his credit a vast and varied literature including novels, dramas, memoirs and history in Gujarati, as also several historical and other works in English, notably Gujarat and Its Literature, Imperial

Gujaratas, Creative Art of Life, To Badrinath, The End of an Era, Krishnavatara, Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life, Saga of Indian Sculpture, Bhagawan Parashurama, Tapasvini, Prithvi Vallabh and The Master of Gujarat.

The Wrath of an Emperor Details

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Sumeetha Manikandan says

The second part of the Krishnavatara series starts from where the first left off. Kamsa is killed in the middle of the arena and Krishna has a poignant reunion with his long-suffering mother.

Once the sentiments get sorted, the politics of those times come into play. Kamsa was the son-in-law and an important vassal of Jarasandha the mighty emperor of Aryavarta. With a huge crowd of Kamsa's allies and supporters gathered in Mathura, the Yadava council wants to crown Krishna as the next king. Here Munshi's impeccable research shows up. Yadavas were a democratic people. There were no kings in their hierarchy though Kamsa's father was called a 'King' more out of courtesy. But then when Kamsa seizes power from him father, he forces people to acknowledge him as a king. Now that Kamsa is gone, Krishna urges their council to reinstate the Yadava chiefs to their rightful place and to bring back their democratic rule. (Note: This fact is well documented in both Mahabharata and Bhagavata Puranam.)

Krishna refuses the crown of Mathura and takes a tearful farewell from his adopted father Nanda. The council decides to send Krishna and his brother to Guru Sandipani's ashram to educate them in arms and statecraft.

Parallel to this, runs Rukmini's passion for Krishna whom she contrives to meet whenever possible. Sadly for her, Krishna is enigmatic as ever and doesn't give her any encouragement.

Krishna's education in Sandipani's ashram gives us a glimpse of how young students were trained in all aspects of life. Politics, statecraft, arms, weaponry, learning how to make one's arms were one of many of the lessons taught to students.

According to myths, Krishna and Udhava rescue Punardatta from an underworld kingdom, which in this case becomes an unknown island off Prabhasa sea. The description about Nagakanyas and their weird traditions makes a fascinating adventure. And this is where Krishna also comes into possession of his legendary conch, Panchajanya.

Back home, Krishna and Balarama find that Jarasandha is poised to attack Mathura so they escape to Parashurama's ashram hoping that the angry emperor will come after them leaving the city alone. Parashurama advises them to stay with a mountain tribe called Garuda. So the ever-faithful garudas becomes a tribe here rather than fascinating bird creatures. It is here that Krishna builds his arms, his bow and arrow, mace and the enigmatic Sudarshana Chakra. While Krishna is thus occupied Balarama discovers that there is more to life than just making arms and he indulges himself in nectar; a habit and an attitude that would define him in the later years.

Jarasandha attacks and the brothers are able to defeat him. Udhava's adventures are also interesting and the fiery Karavirapura Princess Shaibya is a very fascinating character. Udhava's trial by fire and his surrender to Krishna is one of the most important chapters in this book. You can almost call it as a pre-cursor to Udhava Gita, a discourse that Krishna gives to Udhava before he disappears from earth.

Krishna's escape from Kala Yavana's wild hoards is well described and keeps the pace of the book alive. Things move on fast from this chapter onwards culminating in Rukmini's kidnapping. The beauty of Munshi's narrative is that, even though you know how the story is going to end, you will fret with Rukmini,

feel sad for her plight and get anxious when she is about to step into the funeral pyre because her Lord has not come yet.

This book is almost like the coming of the age of Krishna's character. From this point on, this charming cowherd will become a seasoned politician and a master chess player in the arena of kings.

Jayan Parameswaran says

What was impressive about this part of the Krishnavatara was the way K M Munshi treated the subject. The Krishna we see here, is a young prince, trying to protect his people from a huge and powerful enemy. The heroics are not always in confronting. He knew the strength of his opponent and the weakness of his own people. Hence he cleverly managed and planned his actions, be it fleeing the emperor and diverting the attention and the anger towards him, sparing his people, or by shifting the entire populace to safe places. You also see clever manipulations between the kingdoms, the alliances formed and broken, the battle plans and trickery. What we witnessed in these pages continued through out the history of mankind. You see political alliances formed between countries, the alliances sealed with marriages. The helplessness of smaller kings against the might of a large army.

Though Krishna continue to perform miracles in tackling some of the dredged criminals and kings through out his journey, most of his deeds aren't extra ordinary or painted with any divine touch. They are by someone who is destined to maintain 'dharma' in the world and are performed some one with knowledge and skills. Even against his enemies he is considerate and genuine.

I thought Sri K M Munshi, did a phenomenal job in the Book 2, by not glorifying the actions as holy and divine and performed by 'Avatara'. He focused on the humane side of the young prince, his worries for his parents, his close friends and associates and the Yadava people. Despite the advances of Shaibya (whom he rescued from Karavirapura) or Rukmini, he maintained his stand on preserving dharma as his duty and the rest has to wait.

The style is much more clearer (may be I'm getting used to it) and the language despite few hiccups and unevenness is much better in Book 2. The flow and structure with its many diversions and sub texts converged back to the main theme. Fabulous read.

Janakiraman TK says

Amazing book, amazing story. Second in Krishnavatara series gets the readers to feel the political tensions between the kingdoms in aryavatha and the dangerous game of thrones that Krishna and Jarasandha play. Wonderful read, I am just loving this series of books more and more as I progress through them. Simply Unputdownable!!!

Tej says

I am almost done reading this book and found this series appealing. Simple English and readable. Each chapter is a short story which is easy to understand. The level of detail about Krishna and all the characters

are amazing. I am reading Mahabharat by Krishna Mohan Ganguly and i was impressed by the level of detail in Mahabharat but the details of the events in KrishnaAvataar are astonishing. I started from the second book and would like to know the source of this book (the book might be translation from a sanskrit text but i don't know the reference for KrishnaAvataar). Most of the books that i have read about Krishas HIS acts are described "God like" and magical instead of a strategic thinker (eg: preparing for war as soon as he reaches Mathura as he knew Jarasand will attack), hard working (At Gomantaka where Balram was resting HE worked tirelessly with the Garudas to train them and reseaching metal for arms), diplomatic (dealing with yadavs or Brindala or Saibhya) and graceful. Inspirational and very informative. Credit goes to K M Munshi for writing such a gem.

Sriti Patra says

Part 2 of the krishnavtar series revolves around Krishna's quests in mathura. This book is as beautiful as its first part.

Ashish Jaituni says

The Second volume is good. I guess the remaining five parts will good just like the first two.

Shinde says

A relief to see Krishn the brain, the diplomat, the mover & shaker, the foresighted with scrupulous ideas of Dharma.

This one has Mathura-Dwarka migration and plenty of palace intrigue. Krishn's multipronged relations with Balram (esp Krishn's awareness of overshadowing Balram's achievements), Uddhava , Jarasandha and even Kamsa (whose death he mourns as a necessary evil).

Rukmini is portrayed as peevish, petulant and starry eyed while Shaibya gets the more interesting role as she transforms from intense hatred to intense love before settling on intense worship.

Recommended to anyone with doubts about Krishn's mind, ideas and dualities.

Mercedes says

A classical Indian myth told with a rich vividness that echoes the country within which its set.
