REVIEW ARTICLE

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Narrative "Lore" and Legend from Saurashtra (India)

Gems Waiting to be Polished

Meghani, Jhaverchand. Oral Traditions of Saurashtra series. I: *A Noble Heritage: Short Stories Based on Saurashtra's Folklore*; II: *The Shade Crimson: Short Stories Based on Saurashtra's Folklore*; III: *A Ruby Shattered: Love Legends of Saurashtra in Folk Balladry Form*. Trans. from Gujarati by Vinod Meghani. Mumbai (Bombay): Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (Bhavan's Book University), 2003.
Email: <brbhavan@bom7.vsnl.net.in>. Website: <http://www.bhavans.info>.

Asian Folklore Studies, Volume 65, 2006: 323–337

It is a sad irony that Indians from one linguistic area can remain entirely ignorant about the folklore of other areas unless there are intermediary translations into English. Such translations, like the three invaluable volumes to hand, of course also allow much of the rest of the world access to priceless material. The translator is the son of Jhaverchand Meghani, the collector. The volumes are attractively presented, and the decorative sketches by Pratapsinh Jadeja, Khodidas Parmar, Jagdeep Smart, Arvind Joshi, and (it seems) others by Ravishankar Rawal from the original Gujarati publication, are pleasant, but perhaps not actually "truly representative of the folk-art…of the contemporary Saurashtra" as the General Editor's preface claims (I: vi). Some look as if they have been reduced, and a larger size would have been more attractive.

The first two volumes contain twenty-five stories "based on the folklore of Saurashtra": the first selection is for a younger audience, the second for a somewhat older one. The third volume translates six "love legends…in folk-balladry form," names seven other "legends" not included (III: xiii, xviii) and summarizes one of these at length (III: 155–56). The titling might imply that the original materials in the third volume were complete rather than reconstructed from fragments, but that does not seem to be so. Further, many of the tales in all three volumes are in a mixture of verse and prose. Some of the tales "based on folklore" in the first two volumes are studded with verses, and tucked away in an essay in the context of one of the "love-legends" in the third is the pointer that these "legends are not entirely in the form of verses…each *duha* [couplet] is a stanza of an independent lyric…[the] *duha*s do not always recount events. A singular event penetrating the vital of the story [crucial to the plot/narrative sequence?] triggers a string of *duha*s by theme" (III: 155, see also III: xviii). Occasionally long stretches of the narrative are carried by *duha*s one after the other, with no prose, for example, the terminal elegies in "A Requiem" (II: 111–12) or the continuous *duha*s of anguish in "A Ruby Shattered" (III: 136–41).

There is a crying need for the formal generic difference between the "folklore" and the "folk-balladry" to be spelt out. Is the term "balladry" being used only loosely? Is it the *proportion* of verse to prose in a narrative that makes the

difference? Is it the subject-matter of tragic love alone which distinguishes the "balladry" from the "lore" (see III: xxi)? Is the distinction one of length? Is it that the "balladry" is part of public contexts while the "lore" is told in households, or that (the verse portion of?) the "balladry" is *sung*, and (all/most of) the "lore" is *recited*/told? It is clear that the "legends" can incorporate particular poetic genres such as the lyric form which goes through the "twelve months" (III: 150, 156–57). Separately, there are lists of and references to various Gujarati folk genres at various points (for example, I: ix, 112, 149), but the uninformed reader needs all these to be defined and systematically distinguished, with a quick account of the characteristics of each, if possible.

Some context is indeed provided by the three essays in these volumes, compiled and abridged from Meghani's writings ("The Human Touch" [1925] in the first two volumes, "In the Lap of the Mountains" [1931], and "The Charani Lore" [n.d.] in the third), along with "Soaked by the Shade Crimson" (the translator's note) and "About the Author" in all three volumes, and the notes to some individual stories. The essays need bibliographical details of the writings and lectures they work with. The material in all the apparatus sometimes needs to be rendered more clearly, perhaps toning down the breathless purple prose, particularly on Romantic landscapes (unless the object is to convey the feeling-tone of Meghani's original rhetoric).

COLLECTION: IMPETUS, PROCESS

Jhaverchand Meghani (1896–1947), was a nationalist littérateur towards the end of the Indian colonial period. He worked in a Calcutta factory between 1918 and 1920, and saw the focus on folklore among the intellectuals of the Bengal Renaissance. This inspired him to become a traveling folklorist-collector, focusing on Saurashtra (Kathiyawad [Kathiawar], and its Sorath region) in the peninsula of the state of Gujarat in India's west. He reconstructed about a hundred short stories from oral fragments, "accentuating the literary element, and extolling…[their] values" (I: ix). Meghani's five-volume compendium of folklore, *Saurashtra-nee Rasdhar* (loosely, "Saurashtra's Spirit"), published in the 1920s, is still popular eighty years after (I: 112). Let us hope that these three volumes foreshadow *all* this material ultimately being translated into English.

The essays give us some valuable insight into Meghani's motives and processes. Decay/dying-out is often adduced as a reason for recovery/preservation. In 1925, Meghani mourns the decay of folklore under modernization (I: xv, so the accelerating process of decay must be even more complete today). The 1931 essay goes further (III: xviii–xx). Fidelity to a notionally recoverable and relatively "pure" and perfect original is often a lynchpin of projects to reconstruct folk narrative (though sometimes questioned today), and in the 1920s, Meghani

says, folk-memory is growing feeble, *duha* singers are dying out, practitioners remember the tunes but mangle and pervert the words, metres and meanings. He says he could have camouflaged this degenerate material as genuine *duha*-literature, but that would be dishonest.

And Meghani gives us a delightful image of him wandering to find "authentic versions," gathering many variants, weighing the "veracity" of each (a linguistic/grammar-based act, or an aesthetic one?) to establish a "credible form." He presents a picture of himself on a train with the villagers singing to stay awake to prevent thievery, and having to reassure and cajole suspicious singers who stop singing when they see him making notes. He tells how they depreciate the material as the gabble of illiterates and of no interest to the educated; how, shy and self-conscious, they protest that their memories have gone; and how the folklorist is given leads to people that might or might not pay off. We see how the folklorist jogs memories and thus brings forth a line with a clue that clarifies a perverted form to hand, so that a "picturesque" original emerges (or one that makes sense?)—Meghani gives a concrete example. And he states clearly that the "task of retrieving all that neatness, shapeliness and the original form demanded patience, perseverance, footwork and tact" (III: xix–xxi). Elsewhere, he talks of many *duha* verses related to a particular legend being newly unearthed (III: 88).

Meghani's 1931 essay provides a sense of a public performative context in its description, told to Meghani by his fellow-villager Lukman, of the Shivaratri fair at Girnar with its contest between balladeers, men and women, who went for three days and nights without sleep (III: xii–xiv). We learn that apart from narratives, impromptu riddling *duha*-compositions were proffered for solution. We learn that all fairs had these contests, and that a bamboo pole filled with pearls was the winner's trophy for a year. We hear an anecdote of a loser-singer's aged mother going on a stretcher to take up a contest, and of *duha*-battles between cowherds and aged farmers *outside* the context of a fair (III: xv–xvi).

Meghani also tells us of one of his inspirations for collecting, the reformist prince Vajsoor Wala, who remembered the techniques of bard Samat-bhai Gadhavi and told his tales, thus indicating a lineage of transmission (III: xvii). An essay appended to a story, "The Profile of a Minstrel: Gagubhai Leela" (II: 23–31), compiled from Meghani's notes, is very valuable. It talks of how, via Vajsoor Wala, Meghani met the minstrel (who died in 1941). This gentleman told stories, not sang them; unlike others, he was pro-collection and publishing; and he did not exalt the high poetic register of Dingal (see below) over women's folksongs. (The various interpolated anecdotes in the essay would have read better if set off by spacing.) An essay appended to another story, "The Seed of 'Redemption'" (II: 51–53) gives an account of another sort of teller, the widowed sister of an ex-schoolmate of Meghani's, who told her story differently from how a Charan minstrel or storyteller would have (see below), with greater pathos.

On the model of such work on the Grimms' practices, if Meghani's notes of the fragments he collected still exist (notes of a narrative's bare bones are given in II: "The Seed of 'Redemption," 51), there is room for critical explorations of the assumptions and implied aesthetic governing how he "wrote them up". Occasionally there are clear traces of such reconstruction as when the text frames a narrative with a conversation (II: "A Mare and her Rider," III: "Ghastly Wailed the Ghost," where the frame seems to include a scrap of legend and the various narrative segments seem assembled rather than a seamless whole, similarly the opening of I: "The Intrepid"), or when a narrative includes an anecdote and its material feels traditional but its interpolation feels perhaps a little alien to "folk narration" (II: "Tall as a Palm Tree"). When particular *duha*s are on general topics and not obviously inextricably part of a particular narrative, like the various *duha*s on the rains in "A Ruby Shattered," particularly the three by an anonymous Motisar poet in memory of his patron (III: 127–28, 131, 132, 133, 134) are they found in more than one context, were they part of the story according to folk tellers, or integrated by the collector?

THE MATERIAL: HISTORY

In the essay "The Charani Lore," Meghani tells of Charans, feudal bards, genealogists, guardians of values who negotiated truces, sang on battlefields, protected the oppressed, took up arms, and were thought worthy of worship. Found all around western India in the eighth century, they then concentrated in Saurashtra and neighboring Rajasthan. In the invasions of the fifteenth century Charans rallied in Rajasthan (III: 145–47).

The wandering Charans sang in Dingal—and the description of Dingal could have been much clearer here. From Old Rajputani was born Dingal, a "poetical medium," understood in Rajasthan and Saurashtra, cast in the mould of such other phonetic tongues as Sindhi and Kutchhi, adopting loan words from various sources, refurbished by folk tongues. Dingal bifurcated into a courtly stream which rendered divine and courtly heroic material, and a rustic stream which rendered pastorals, love poetry, and folklore. When Meghani says Dingal is "neither a language nor a dialect" but "a "mode of rendering poetry" in various genres, in which the diction "looked like a synthetic concoction," ungrammatical and disproportionate (III: 148–49, 151), does he mean it is an "artificial/stylised" poetic register?

Duha poetry in Dingal is rhyming four-footed couplets (or variations of three, four, or six lines) distinct from season-celebrating pastorals and complex metrical poetry. It is brief, condensed, vivid and lyrical, can deal with folk wisdom, love and battle (III: 151). Charan and non-Charan folk minstrels used *duha*s for oral folk poetry (III: 152). "Propped by twenty or fifty *duha*s, many a

saga…[has] survived the passage of time," for "without *duha*s, the stories would not have survived" (III: 152). Some legends do not recount the events, but only the emotions; some tell both (III: 157–58). Some think *duha* verse is an unruly structural form and can be composed effortlessly, and just by rhyming a couple of metrical lines, but true crystalline *duha*s permit no flaccidity (III: 153). Meghani says that the oldest *duha*s, recounting a romance, are 1500 years old (III: 158): a footnote pointing to the evidence would be welcome. There is a useful note on overlap of dialects in one case (III: 88), but again, an uninitiated reader needs to know: are all the *duha*s in all the volumes in Dingal?

COLLECTION: VALUE FOR HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, LITERATURE

In 1925, Meghani asserts that folk-literature humbly tucks away details that history does not record (I: xv), and he seems largely to have been interested in folk narrative as a path to history, part of his "ardent desire to examine and identify the medieval era of Saurashtra" (III: xviii) . This focus determined his selection of only those *duha*s which could be established as part of recorded history (III: xviii): a somewhat needlessly limiting focus by our standards. For when a note, for example, tells how the same events are attributed to different historical characters from different communities in different places (II: "Friendship," 135) we remember that this sort of travelling and oikotypification even in the same area is in the very nature of folk narrative. Meghani's historical focus goes with a focus on the localities where the narratives are set, as his notes to the tales show. Meghani talks of search for the relevant sites and character names, but curiously, he says that no effort is made to date either the events or time of composition (III: 158): why?

The floridity of Meghani's prose means that his attitude to the literary aspects of the folk narratives is unclear. Is there a contradiction between the historical/spatial interests and psychological/literary ones when Meghani *also* says that he is not in quest of evidence to establish the credibility of the finales of the legends of tragic love, but is seeking to evaluate emotions and the "technique of rendering" them (III: xxi)? He says that he searched for "meanings hidden in the mystical compositions," but he also says he did not aim "to reveal the literary delight that the *duha* embodies,…[but] merely compiled and rendered the heroic [materials?]" (III: xviii). What does this mean? Surely interpretation, compiling and rendering reveals literary delights? Or does he just mean that his focus is collecting, not literary criticism?

COLLECTION: VALUE IN PROVIDING EXEMPLARS FOR TODAY OR IN RECORDING THE VALUES OF ANOTHER AGE?

Folklore collection often works in the service of ethnic pride/cultural renaissance/nationalism; Meghani's work did so too (I: ix). These goals can sometimes,

however, go with nostalgia tinged with jingoism. The translator says Meghani saw the values of this folk material as "eternal and universal," and the translator himself clearly says "their revival seems to be the need of the hour" at a time of their "erosion." In the context, he talks of "inherent human goodness" (I: ix, x). In an India and a Gujarat racked by communal and caste tension (still), indeed exemplary are Meghani's examples of a folk-legend (I: xv–xvi, I: "To Protect a Woman's Virtue") preserving an otherwise unrecorded event demonstrating mutual Hindu-Muslim loyalty, consideration of taboos, and intermarriage (though the same story also has a touch of caste/class rejection that is unpleasant to today's sensibilities). Similarly exemplary are the folk legends of inter-caste/community marriage (I: xvii; see also III: 26, and the tales of low-caste valor and honor and social acceptance, though Meghani does not specifically cite them), and instances of Hindu poets employing Islamic religious forms and Muslims singing Hindu devotional songs (I: xviii, xix).

However, the reference to the "magnanimity of Hindutva" and these Hindu religious songs "embodying the essence of Hindutva" (I: xix) may give some readers pause. For whether the word "Hindutva" is used here by accident or design (and whether it is the collector's or the translator's), in the India of the last two decades it is, for some of us, fearsome code for fundamentalist Hindu oppressive "majoritarianism"—what some of us call "an ugly shade of saffron." Similarly, regardless of the author's original intention, is there something more than mere neutral exposition—something that could lend itself to retrograde projects—in Meghani's rhapsodies on the sacred motives of the Charan bards in the battles of Hindu vs. (Muslim) invader (III: 147), or in the *selection* here today, in particular, of a tale of Hindu martyrdom when polluted by Islam (II: "'O Bhagirathi!'"), for all that there are also a few exemplary Muslims in some of the stories in these volumes? Has Ahmedabad officially become "Amadavad"—and if not, is its use in the maps here designed to avoid a Muslim-sounding name?

Meghani himself does indeed say that his is "not a mere destructive and childish lust for…[the] revival" of the medieval period (III: xviii). He is not an uncritical hailer of historic/folkloric exemplars: he accepts that not all aspects of the heroes might look admirably heroic (xii–xiii), he abhors "parochial vanity" and celebrates the universal love of the heroic (I: xxvi). Nevertheless, some of us today might question Meghani's innocent citing of "The Charge of the Light Brigade" as inspiring "every British toddler…to sacrifice" and his looking for a Gujarati Tennyson (I: xxv), and we may be less inclined than he to celebrate religious/heroic acts "comparable to the hara-kiri of Japan" and instances of wifely self-sacrifice (I: xxi, xx).

In relation to emulating—as against noting—the values of the narratives, is there a latent contradiction or tension between the introduction to the first two

volumes and the introduction to the third? For in the latter, Meghani speaks of the nomadic Ahir community of some of the tales acknowledging divorce and remarriage and their morality valuing love over conventional fidelity. In every love-legend, he continues, "the woman emerges stronger than the man," whether she is depicted as fierce or delicate. But here he says that the hill tribes and the love-sacrifices of their narratives, their setting aside of "civility and social restraint," "cannot provide us with [ethical] ideals," and we cannot "formulate fresh tenets" from them, though their vitality is a source of refreshment. And so, "our studies of the romantic literature of the hill dwellers are motivated mainly by our curiosity" about alien lives and emotions (III: xxii–xxiv).

So is it that different standards apply to feudal heroic values and other less normative sexual values? Anyhow, rather than over-hastily celebrating/condemning these feudal/chivalric and other codes of behavior, Meghani's materials and commentaries can provide insight into them, and lead us to reflect on them.

THIS FOLKLORE WORLD

This body of material calls out for a motif-analysis. Jumping out at us are a supernatural husband who, like Cupid, spends each night with a wife and disappears during the day (III: "Ghastly wails the Ghost"), "Potiphar's wife" (III: "Hothal"), a supernatural wife who must leave if her identity is revealed (III: "Hothal"), and in a more Indic context, echoes of the fate of Sita when Mother Earth accepts a heroine (I: "A Woman's Virtue"), and of King Sibi when a king cuts himself up to feed a vulture (II: "A Requiem").

These thirty-odd tales (out of Meghani's original hundred) might provide the flavor of an entire imaginative world. It is a world of highway *dacoits* (robbers) and strong women, of bad moneylenders (for example, I: "The Deed," "In the Witness of the Sun and the Moon") and scribes (I: "A Bequest"), of jealous tell-tales causing trouble (II: "'O Bhagirathi!'" II: "The Indomitable Twelve"), of enmities (sometimes between relatives) and the ending of enmities (for example, I: "A Bequest," I: "Magnanimous Foes," II: "The Indomitable Twelve," II: "Revenge," II: "An Outlaw," III: "Ghastly Wailed the Ghost"), and of endings with royal gifts of land or money (for example, I: "The Deed," II: "Tall as a Palm Tree"). It is a world where all members of local communities share in community pride, so that Untouchables behave bravely or otherwise honorably and are given their meed of honor (II: "A Word of Honour," a charming account of how one princely state holds an area away from its own territory; II: "Kaniya"). It is also a world where a woman can leave a bad or a kind husband (I: "Jatashankar;"III: "On the Banks of the Shetrunji"), where a bridegroom can be told to go and marry another, though he returns (I: "Her Inheritance"), and where a loving family can

(wrongly) get a husband who they think has overworked a wife to sign a deed of annulment and the wife to remarry (II: "Redemption").

Further, this is a world of omens and curses. A king takes shelter to avoid the prophecy of his death (II: "An Outlaw"); when a wife's red bangles (which signify her married status) break, her husband's enemy cousins are preparing for his murder (II: "Revenge"); a ghost signifies his presence to a wedding party when blood drips from a tree (III: "Ghastly Wailed the Ghost"); the curse of a shepherdess comes true (II: "The Indomitable Twelve"). Emotions and their outlets are sometimes curiously alien to us. A woman strangles the son of her husband's benefactor and hers (II: "Friendship"); an uncle eats a nephew's rabbit and kills his father; after staying silent, a paternal aunt helps her nephew to kill her husband, who had killed her brother (II: "Revenge"); a man driven mad by losing his wife is duped by her sister posing as her (III: "A Ruby Shattered"); a country maid curses the prince who will not marry her with leprosy but then immolates herself on his pyre (III: "Meh and Ujali").

A single tale (I: "In the Witness of the Sun and the Moon") stands out as the only one focused on exposing trickery (the wet ink of a cross-mark on a legal document is sprinkled with sugar to be eaten by ants) through intelligence and the power of a traditional phrase ("in the witness of the sun and the moon," for the sunlight shows up the erasure). The others celebrate different values, and I made a rough grouping of these.

1. *Honoring obligations at whatever cost* was the first. When a snake-god demarcates a boundary, it pauses at a tree on the boundary, and slices itself in two (II: "Tall as a Palm Tree"). The promises of a gift are honored both when a prince mistakenly gives away land belonging to someone else (I: "A Bequest"), and when, in order to uphold the good name of "we the maternal clan," an untouchable tanner says his master has made a gift of a town (II: "A Word of Honour"). A married couple keep a vow to abjure conjugal relations while they work to repay a loan (I: "The Deed"). A village-bond engenders an intercaste "brotherly" loyalty to protect a "sister" to the death (I: Jatashankar). A pair of outlaw brothers repay a ghost's hospitality by going on a journey to procure rest for his soul, and the grateful ghost reciprocates by responding on their behalf when their sister calls out for them (III: "Ghastly Wailed the Ghost"). A companion in arms will not take service with a Muslim emperor and leave his comrade; and a gift of a buffalo is gratefully remembered for years (III: "Hothal"). A man who was enemies with his cousin avenges the cousin's death in battle against his killer, then the killer and the avenger jointly defend the honor of the killer's daughter (I: "Magnanimous Foes").

2. *Self-sacrifice* is the second value*, either in protecting the weak or in extreme magnanimity*. A raja takes the place of a woman forced to draw a plough (I: "Raja Depal-de"). A Muslim group is unprotected by some Hindu groups, but protected at great cost by one (I: "To Protect a Woman's Virtue"). Two outlaw brothers guard their enemy brother-in-law lest he be attacked and they be accused of the crime (III: "Ghastly Wailed the Ghost"). An overlord lends his horse to the man who accidentally killed his son so that he can escape (I: "The Killer of His Son"). A host gives his guest a horse even when that guest plans to steal it and could easily also be suspected of sleeping with his host's wife; that guest in return forgives his ex-host when the latter's wife murders his son, and gives him what he needs (II: "Friendship"). An outlaw with the same name as his cousin and enemy the king takes the force of the thunderbolt destined to injure the king (II: "An Outlaw"). A husband can leave virgin a wife who does not love him and bring her back to the one she truly loves (III: "On the Bank of the Shetrunji"). A brother-in-law will not reveal his sister-in-law's lust for him and crime against him, even to a stranger ("Hothal"). When a sister helps her brother's son Pithash after he has killed her husband in revenge, and his sons seek to murder Pithash, Pithash asks to be allowed to give his wife her bangles and return, and that wife follows him with horses to give the would-be murderers a head start in escaping, just as their mother had given her husband (II: "Revenge").

3. The third value is *great physical bravery which tends to go with great loyalty*. Admiration of such bravery crosses communities: Muslim monarchs admire their brave Hindu adversaries (II: "The Indomitable Twelve"; III: "Hothal"). A brave man goes alone to disable five cannons by himself (I: "The Intrepid"). A rustic man keeps asking an overlord to leave a boundary strip between villages owned by two overlords, then overcomes the overlord, and the large band he sends (II: Tall as a Palm Tree"). Twelve men swear blood-brotherhood; in battle eleven of them (including the only one from a non-fighting mendicant caste) gather up the dismembered parts of their bodies and return to their circle to die; the absent one returns and joins them on the pyre (II: "The Indomitable Twelve"). A brave Untouchable beats the drum, a carpenter acts bravely, the Untouchable saves his overlord and the town (II: "Kaniya"). A Hindu bard, manipulated and forced into making the Muslim call to prayer, sings in praise of the Ganga in anguish, and reveals that before coming to the mosque he had stabbed himself in the stomach, while the holy water rises and accepts him (II: "'O Bhagirathi!'"). Imprisoned in a castle, a hero continues his custom of feeding birds of prey, but now by dismembering himself (II: "A Requiem").

4. His suicide brings shame upon his captor cousins, makes them lose face, while in death, he retains his. And *the stories set a high value on the symbolic challenges to and maintenance of "face"* (a calm demeanor in the face of death is compulsory), in competitive *public* demonstrations of excellence. When there is no threat to life, and a man is challenged to a horserace by a recluse, the challenged one abducts a bridegroom just so his mare's prowess will get an audience of pursuers, whom he treats very hospitably (I: "A Horserace"). Inadvertently given coarse food, an insulted guest publicizes it, the host seeks ways to decry his ex-guest's hospitality, but the latter's womenfolk make vast preparations to entertain his people magnificently, and the ex-guest himself empties sacks of sugar into a roadside well as a drink for them, while there is much surface-apologizing for the meagerness of this hospitality (I: "Hospitality").

The challenges to face, retaining face and making the adversary lose face are public or symbolic acts, or both. The insulted guest carries bread and an onion on his spear-tip to show the poor hospitality of his host (I: "Hospitality"). A king twits his ashamed wife that her brother has sent no presents for her son's wedding, a public matter (II: "A Word of Honour"). An emperor gives the choice between obeisance or battle (II: "The Indomitable Twelve"). A minstrel snidely asks a Hindu whom he has pushed towards the Muslim call to prayer whether he will be cremated or buried when he dies, that is, whether he is a Hindu or Muslim (II: "'O Bhagirathi'").

When he wins, a warrior carries his adversary's turban aloft on his lance (II: "Tall as a Palm Tree"). To humble an emperor's gibes at his cousin, a man has to steal the emperor's camels, as does his companion, to fulfil his father's similar vow. That companion shows off his prowess before the warriors and shoots out emperor's gong and canopy (III: "Hothal"). When the British Government summons a prince, but cannot break his spirit and "permits" him to leave, he impudently rides past the camp of Lang-sahib as he goes, and says he *wants* to greet the British, in the face-accreting surface courtesy which is actually rudeness (II: "A Requiem"). Related is a (genuine? assumed?) meek manner that can turn to towering rage, and (genuine? assumed?) great modesty (II: "Tall as a Palm Tree").

Codes of honor offer face-saving escape clauses which are always rejected. The code of hospitality (I: "Hospitality"; II; "Friendship") means an uncle will not take a nephew-guest on an expedition, but the nephew goes anyway (III: "Ghastly Wailed the Ghost"). A Muslim ruler does not wish to cause the death of a group of brave men, so his vizier says to arrange matters so that the enemy's head emerges with his back to the Muslims who can give that reason for refusing to fight him, but the hero

evades the ploy and does not turn his back on them (II: "The Indomitable Twelve").

5. Whole communities, men and women, rise against threat (II: "Tall as a Palm Tree;" II: "Kaniya") or loss of face (I: "Hospitality"). But *physically brave women* have stories of their own. A woman leaves a cowardly husband to immolate herself with the "brother" of a different caste who protected her (I: Jatashankar). Unprotected by her guard, a young wife fights robbers in emotional arousal (I: "A Garasiya Woman"). A daughter kills on behalf of her father (I: "A Daughter as Brave as a Son"). Two other women take on male garb and roles, one to fulfil her husband's debt, the other to avenge her father and fulfil his vow (I: "The Deed;" III: "Hothal"). A wife who swears to her husband to stay at a particular place remains there to drown smiling (III: "A Ruby Shattered"). And a mare braves a swollen stream, saves a wife and child aboard a pontoon, kills the snake threatening them, and succeeds in making a magnificent leap that kills her (II: "A Mare and her Rider"). It could of course be argued that all these instances of female bravery actually sustain male power, but these stories were not composed to accord with modern feminist values.

6. In one case, however, not involving physical bravery, it can be argued that a woman acts for a father *and* for herself. Her dowry threatened by her cousins, a daughter postpones her own wedding, feeds her father well so that his virility is enhanced, finds him a young wife by whom he can have sons, and then, ultimately takes all her dowry (II: "Her Inheritance"). Thus, *woman's virtue is demonstrated in homely ways*, too. Women perform great feats of housework (I: "The Deed;" II: "Redemption;" III: "On the Bank of the Shetrunji"), and in one case a disguised woman's sex is tested by her reaction to milk boiling over (I: "The Deed"). As a result of a woman's virtue, ears of corn bulge with pearls on the land she has been forced to plough like a bullock (I: "Raja Depal-de").

7. A *woman's love is on the whole, greater than a man's*. As a result of a woman's love, water from a muddy rill runs pure in her hands; in her love-madness, she forgets water in a pail; and she can tell her husband that she loves her childhood sweetheart (III: "On the Bank of the Shetrunji"). And a maiden thinks of a charming list of black but beautiful things when she falls in love with a swarthy youth (III: 72, "Crushed into the Dust").

   When true love does not run smooth, disparate financial positions and the poverty of the boy are sometimes the barrier (III: "A Maiden Love;" III: "On the Bank of the Shetrunji"), as are different community memberships (III: "Crushed into the Dust") and in one case, different caste positions

(III: "Meh and Ujali"), though in another this difference exists but is not the obstacle (III: "Ghastly Wailed the Ghost).

There is a pattern in these tales of star-crossed lovers. There are sometimes long journeys/task-fulfilling quests, but the lovers are kept apart (III: "Crushed into the Dust;" III: Meh and Ujali). Women separated from their partners cry out in anguish or send anguished messages to them (II: "Redemption;" III: "Crushed into the Dust;" III: "Meh and Ujali"). An unfortunate separated woman's fate is madness and drowning (II: "Redemption"), making a statue of her beloved in the mountains and freezing to death as he comes to her and his musical instrument breaks (III: "A Maiden Love"), an end as an ascetic (III: "Hothal"), the final embrace of an emaciated pair (III: "Crushed into the Dust"), or death on the pyre of a faithless beloved ("Meh and Ujali"). The men's fates are comparatively less harsh, though they too suffer—an unhappy separated male lover hears an ascetic couple sing a set of verses about a couple in various lives in which the male is repeatedly deserted by his wife (III: "On the Bank of the Shetrunji"). But the males' fates are emblematized by the tale when the female dies but the male returns to the mortal world as a beggar (III: "A Maiden Love").

SUGGESTIONS FOR EDITORIAL REVISION IN FUTURE EDITIONS

It is an unpleasant truth that, even in a globalized world, works on Indic materials published in India are less easily available and less well-known internationally than they should be (in comparison to foreign ones), so I hope these volumes will become known outside India and find their rightful place in libraries. But for all their high value, these volumes need much more editing. Postcolonial books from India need to be able to hold their heads high both at home and internationally; so the following criticisms are intended constructively and could be easily addressed.

Much unnecessary duplication could be avoided. Each volume has a different map of Saurashtra, which could have been consolidated into one larger map, with boundaries demarcated and sites better identified (and the individual maps with each story are useful only when they identify the sites in it, as not all do). There are what amounts to two similar title pages per volume. All three volumes have the same General Editor's preface, and only slightly different translator's notes and terminal notes on the author, which themselves overlap and should be consolidated. The first two volumes have the same altered form of Meghani's 1925 preface. Since the three essays included are in any case compiled/abridged, there is no need to illustrate points by summarising at length (II: 28–30, III: 154) narratives the volumes include in full (and in one case the expository details

could have been moved from the essay in the second volume to the notes to the story itself in the third).

There is no need for endnotes to each story explaining Indian words and a terminal glossary duplicating these notes, no need to gloss the same word more than once in each volume, and no need to keep saying Kathiyawad is now known as Saurashtra (III: 123, 124). However, a good many words which need glosses lack them, for example, in the third volume, some communities get explanatory notes but the Vohra community gets only an uninformative one, and the Hati community none (III: xii, xiv, xxi). Many of the explanatory chapter-endnotes could have been included in the text (in square brackets if Meghani's prose is thought sacrosanct) without any loss of flow. Much of the translated verse (unrhymed), unnecessarily italicized, does not need the additional prose translation. Sometimes the explanatory material separated off at the end of stories is on locations (though, in one instance, the material on locations is part of the text proper: III: 41), and sometimes it is on alternative endings and events after the story proper which seem naturally part of the story itself (for example, II: "An Outlaw," 41; II: "The Indomitable Twelve," 93, 95; III: "A Maiden Love," 20-21; III: "Crushed into the Dust," 86; III: "Hothal," 123). To facilitate ease of reading, in such instances the materials on locations and after-events could well have been woven into the narratives themselves in ordinary type, again perhaps in brackets (just as another after-event is, II: "Tall as a Palm Tree," 66), or separated by a space. And the order of the current note-paragraphs could be standardized (first events, then locations).

If this were done, then the notes themselves could deal purely with authorship, sources, parallels (for which bibliographical details would be welcome), and so on. The convention seems to be terminal notes to each story, separated from the text. So why are the source notes sometimes at the beginning (II: "The Indomitable Twelve;" II: "A Requiem;" III: "Hothal"), leaving the narrative sometimes framed with notes at beginning and end, and why in another instance is the terminal note joined up to the text and in italics (II: "Kaniya," 122)? The translator's note on the recent publication of an item is at the end of the text in one case (III: 158) in an endnote in another (II: 143). Consistency and tidying up are needed.

Omitting the duplicated material in future editions would provide space for bibliographical details of newspaper/periodical first publication of the items included (and if possible, details of which libraries hold these sources) and their place in Meghani's collected volumes. Bibliographical details are needed for F. W. Kincaid's poem on "Kathiland" on the cover of the second volume, and for one of his analogues for a tale (I: 66). Many of the stories about shadowy historical characters are related to particular locations. If the relevant sites still exist, would providing photographs be possible? Though the endpapers provide details of

English translations of a little of Meghani's non-folk-related work, these volumes could provide more information (at least bibliographical details) about Meghani's other work in folklore (odes on outlaws, saints' hymns, and so on), his comparative analyses of materials, his 1944 lectures in English on Gujarati folk-literature delivered at Rabindranath Tagore's university at Shantiniketan, and his other critical essays on Gujarati folk literature.

Foreigners sometimes still delight in sneering at "Babu English" and "Indian English" as less than polished. The General Editor's preface claims that the translation retains the "sheen of the original" (I: vi), but the prose of that translation is unfortunately often very clumsy, and sometimes downright ungrammatical in such locutions as "a snoozing oaf I'm" (III: 143). Particularly odd-looking are the use of "'n" for "and" and "'re" for "are." Awkwardly discordant colloquialisms abound: "Pals, who is in lead?," "how come?," "breather," "them cannons," "bumping off the bigwig of the plunderers," "denim," "squaw," "dolled up," "hold it," and so on. There are odd references to such things as a "cathedral." Some words grate, like "simpering" for "smiling" or "ballerina" for "dancing girl," or "the Apollo" for the Sun-god. "Loaf" is not the best way of rendering flat, unleavened bread when *roti* would have served quite well. Does the word "squire" always translate the same term? Is "sire" used for "sir?" Is the gourd used to make an instrument really a melon (III: 2)? Does "unlettered Dingal" (III: 152) mean untranscribed (that is, solely orally transmitted) or rustic Dingal? There are many such infelicities.

There is inconsistent capitalization of words such as *duha* and community words such as Charan and Rajpoot and Malla and Kathi and Koli. In transliteration, the (inconsistent) use of "aa" and "ee" looks odd to those used to the "ā" and "i" (or "ī"). The Contents page should not come after the introductory material. Footnote numbering should come after the punctuation, and either footnotes or endnotes should be used consistently (preferably footnotes). Page numbers in Roman numerals should be in lower case.