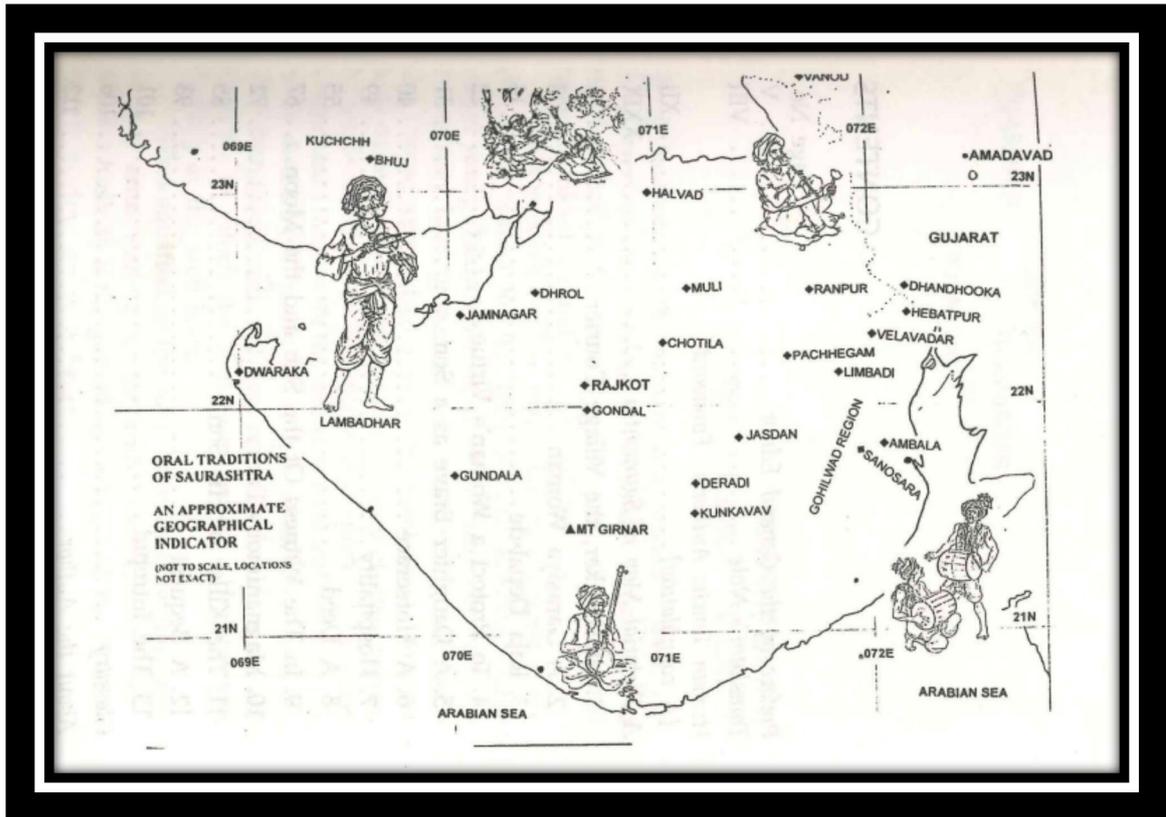


**CHAPTER III**  
**STORIED SPACES**  
**IN**  
***A NOBLE***  
***HERITAGE***



This pictorial map captures spatiality in *A Noble Heritage*

## Chapter III

### Storied Spaces in *A Noble Heritage*

“In one sense folklore is a religious teaching. Folklore binds greatest distances together.  
Wide distances are spanned by the far reach of folklore’s human touch”

- Jhaverchand Meghani

#### 3.1 Introduction

The narratives within *Saurashtra ni Rasdhar* seeks to uncover the essence of Saurashtra’s heritage through over a hundred folk stories, weaving tales from diverse communities and locales. He skilfully populates his tales with a spectrum of figures, from kings and queens to ordinary villagers, stingy Vaniyas and loyal Arabs, creating a dynamic microcosm reflective of the societal milieu from which these narratives emanated. The inclusion of multifaceted women, depicted as both valiant Rajputanis and victims of patriarchy, underscore the intricate social dynamics at play. By invoking a century-old glorious past, the work not only claims a historical space but also seeks to forge a lasting discourse, transcending temporal boundaries to instil a profound regional pride that resonates with future generations. This text thus becomes a transformative vehicle, shaping the social and regional imagination of Kathiawad and leaving an indelible mark on its cultural legacy.

In the nomenclature of *Saurashtra ni Rasdhar*, the linguistic choices made by Jhaverchand Meghani, particularly the neologism ‘Rasdhar’ is crucial to understanding the essence of the collection. Merging ‘rasa’ and ‘dhar,’ he enhances a profound sense of heritage, where ‘dhar’ conveys both dynamic continuity and a firm foundational aspect, akin to the connotation of ‘aadhar.’ The term ‘rasa,’ however, presents a semantic challenge for the translator, possessing diverse meanings in Gujarati, including juice, nectar, essence, flavour and mood within the framework of classical poetry’s Nava-rasas. Meghani, as a writer for the people, ingeniously exploits this semantic richness, subtly producing the diverse cultural experiences from the grassroots, representing the linguistic, social and emotional diversity of the region. Furthermore, the meticulous classification of stories ranging from *Shaurya Kathao* (stories of valor) to *Premkathao* (love stories),

reflects his deliberate organization of narratives according to certain traits that epitomize the authentic culture of Kathiawad. This deliberate thematic structuring becomes significant in the context of early twentieth-century nationalism, where Meghani subtly aligns regional consciousness with broader nationalist aspirations.

This chapter ‘Storied Spaces in A Noble Heritage’ delves in exploration of region of Saurashtra in the context of Vinod Meghani’s *A Noble Heritage* ‘Oral Traditions of Saurashtra: I’(translation), by exploring the ways in which his stories reflect and contribute to the production of space through the critical theories provided by Edward Soja, Henry Lefebvre and David Harvey. This compilation portrays the collection of thirteen stories depicting Saurashtra as a land of sanctuaries where lions roamed in majesty, of rugged hills and vales, of terrifying cliffs and lush glens, of brimming rivers and rivulets and, above all, of the abundance of valour, honesty, chivalry, nobility and love not only between human beings but between all that is animate as well as inanimate. By delving into the Ahiyars, Charans, Bhils, Mers and more, Meghani intricately paints a vivid tableau ranging from Shetrunji riverbanks to the hilly terrains of Kanado and Girnar. The stories unfold the tales of daughters who are treated equally to sons, alongside chronicles of men valiantly safeguarding the honor of women amidst myriad challenges. The portrayal extends to the depiction of resolute and audacious women who assert their rights confidently. The chapter draws on a range of critical perspectives to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between spaces (First Space, Second Space, Third Space, Lived space, Conceived Space, Perceived Space and Production of Space) and text exhibiting how these can be used as a tool to comprehend folk narratives that reconstruct the region of Saurashtra. The chapter structures and revolves around several key concepts, including the significance of oral storytelling traditions in Saurashtra, the performative nature of Meghani’s narratives and the relationship between the physical landscape of Saurashtra and the stories that are associated with it.

### **3.2 Analysis**

The narrative “Jatashankar, the Village Courier” opens against the backdrop of a serene evening, draped in a subtle melancholy. Within this ambiance, the young children brim with anticipation, eagerly awaiting the distribution of sugar candies, slices of coconut and a spoonful of sweet charanamrit infused with the fragrance of a Tulsi leaf. The villagers gathered on the edge of the chora, cradling their infants, displayed a patient

demeanor as they awaited the commencement of the arati ceremony. The individuals engaged in a conversation regarding the transformation of the icon of the lord, which previously radiated with brilliance and exuded a joyful countenance, but has now assumed a diminished appearance reminiscent of the Kaliyuga - a desolate epoch in which even nature embodies sorrow and abstains from celebrating in the present times. The village setting becomes a lived spatial practice, intertwining sensory experiences and cultural rituals.

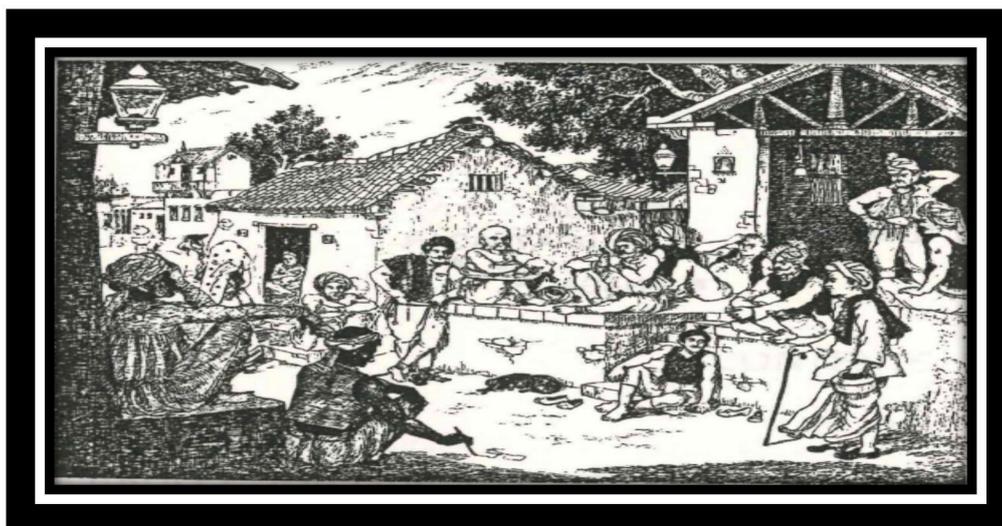


Fig. 4 A Village Chora

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

The discussion progressed to the observation that the sky had darkened significantly, obscuring even the usual emergence of twilight that evening, seeming to foreshadow an impending calamity, when suddenly two wayfarers, a man followed by a woman who could be recognized as a Rajpoot from her attire, were seen approaching from the direction of the market place of the town. Slowly and steadily the night was cascading, and it would also happen to be giving an invitation to a grave and unnecessary risk by travelling in the dark, as he also had his woman with her. Hence, the Rajpoot man was advised and offered an extensive help by the villagers to spend a night there, as they luckily had a well-stocked kitchen in the village. The man, who was arrogant, full of ego, pride and a snub by his nature, refused to listen to the plight of the villagers who were only urging him to be a realist and continued to walk on.

They trudged on amid wilderness. The flickering of oil lamps in the dwellings scattered throughout the nearby villages, gave an eerie impression, as if otherworldly

entities had initiated a spectral dance. Stray dogs on the village outskirts yelped and barked as if they had seen a spectre that others could not see and were trying desperately to convey something that the spook was unable to convey. Meanwhile, the couple overheard a subtle, delicate sound resonating from the vicinity situated at their rear.

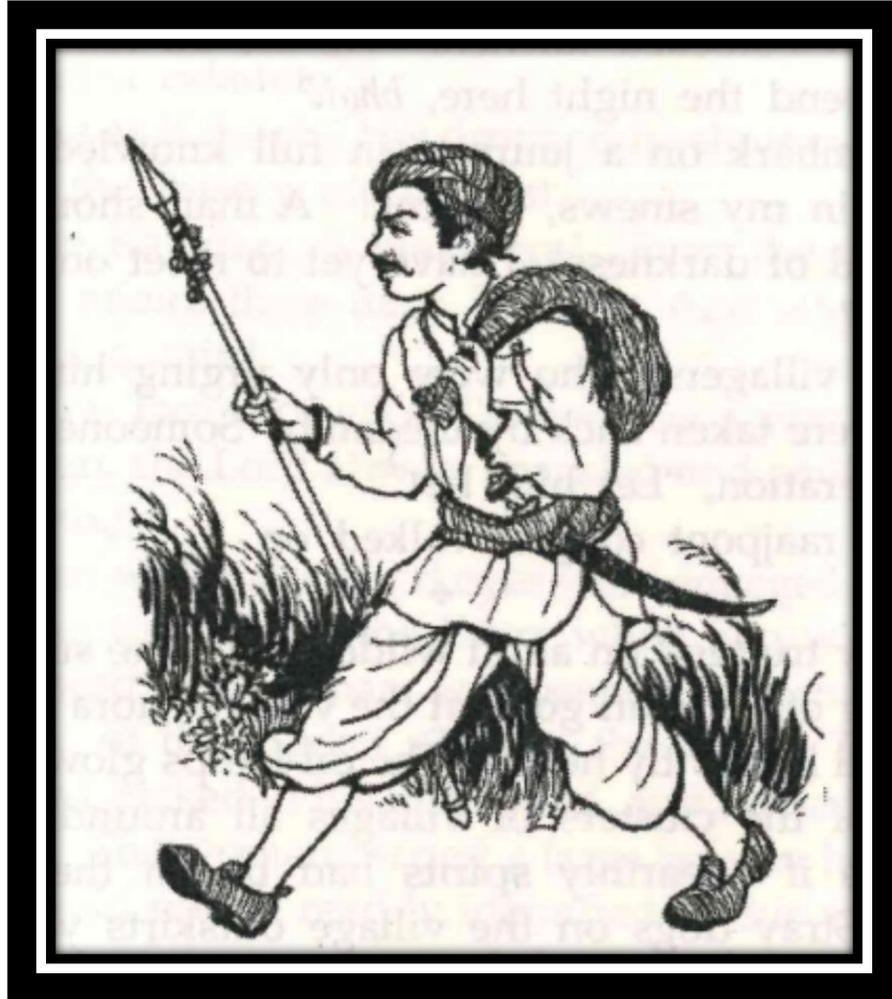


Fig. 5 Jatashankar, the village courier

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

Jatashankar, a resident of Sanosara village, briskly made his way while carrying good and bad news in his mail sack to deliver the couriers. Notably, he held a spear adorned with bells in his hand, exhibiting a confident gait reminiscent of a rustic villager, who also happened to possess a recently honed sword concealed within a worn-out scabbard. It was not that he was concerned of the villagers waiting for their mails and letters, but he hurried in a fear of potential penalties and subsequent salary deductions that could be imposed upon him, if the couriers were not delivered on time. As he was marching ahead, he came across a couple, where a Garasiya woman was rapidly

following her husband at a decent distance, whose parents hailed from Sanosara, the same village as of Jatashankar. Considering her as a sister, a small conversation was initiated between both of them, until they were stopped by a sudden interruption of her husband, stating that, "A brahmin priest should be more discreet". Jatashankar acknowledged the command by stating, "Yes, Sire," and subsequently adjusted his walking speed to a slower pace, ensuring that he maintained a distance of around one farnlength from the couple.

Upon the Rajpoot couple's descent into the culvert slope, twelve voices resounded with a cautionary message, "Beware! Drop your sword!" The Rajpoot individual expressed his discontent verbally, though refrained from unsheathing his sword. Subsequently, a group of twelve dacoits from Ambala village apprehended him and proceeded to bind him with a rope, causing him to descend the culvert slope in a bundled up state. The thieves demanded the Garasiya woman to surrender all her gold to them. When, the helpless woman began to unfasten her ornaments one after the other, an intense desire was evident in their gaze, as the thieves became conscious of her beautiful body and glowing skin as she bared her arms, ankles and nape of ornaments. Initially, when the younger robbers began to make lewd remarks, the woman tried to maintain her calm and composure. Upon observing her silence, as they proceeded to approach her with the intent of causing harm, she swiftly rose with remarkable agility and emitted a hiss akin to that of a cobra, courageously asserting, "You dare not". Responding to this, one of the assailants shouted, "Man, dash the slut to the ground!". The woman looked up helplessly in the dark sky, when she heard the spear tinkling from the courier's bells.

Jatashankar had started walking at a slow pace, when he suddenly heard a voice from the distance, "O Jata-bhai! Come quick!", he drew his sword from the scabbard, rushed to the site as soon as he realized about the seriousness of the situation, and killed seven dacoits out of twelve who had attacked him collectively with his batons. When the woman began to shriek and scream for help, the remaining robbers fled. He then swooned and collapsed by bearing the barrage of the baton blows, courageously giving up his life for the woman whom he had known only for five minutes. The women hurriedly went up to her husband and undid the rope. As soon as he was on his feet, he said, "Let's go". "Go where? Coward! Aren't you ashamed?" snarled the Garasiya women and stated with a firm determination in her voice, "This Brahmin with an acquaintance of only five minutes

of walking together fought for my virtue and is dying! And you- my life companion, nay, companion for the lives to come! - love your life so much that you want to leave him dying and run away! Go, squire! Go your way! You and I are different, different as crows and swans. Our paths can't be the same. I shall now burn myself in the pyre of this Brahmin who gave his life for me." Even after everything that happened, the egoist husband who was extremely inhumane and selfish by his nature scurried away by stating, "I shall find many like you" largely representing the male dominated patriarchal society that has existed since times immemorial and which doesn't cease to exist in many communities of Saurashtra even today.

She showed her inner strength and courage when she broke all the ties with her husband, who was incapable of protecting her virtue and tried to run away instead of saving the life of Jatashankar- the courier, who was dying because of fighting with the dacoits to save her life, stating that their paths can't be same as they both are extremely different like crows and swans. By taking Jatashankar's body in her lap and clambering up the pyre, she committed the act of suttee, dedicating her life for the man who had sacrificed his life to protect her virtue. She being the liberated woman, broke the shackles of patriarchy by rejecting her husband who was unable to protect her dignity, and by becoming a suttee for an unknown man who gave his life for her. Jatashankar's headstone and virtuous woman's palm marks exists even today as a symbol of extreme bravery, strength and humanity at a gorge between Ambla and Ramdhari.

The first space represented by real space is vividly depicted through various geographical locations in the narrative. The serene evening at the village chora, the gorge between the villages of Ambala and Ramdhari, and the regal setting of Sanosara depicts tangible spaces grounding the narrative. These physical locations become crucial backdrops for the unfolding events, symbolizing the real-world contexts in which the characters navigate. The anticipation of the arati ceremony, the discussion about the transformation of the lord's icon and the eerie impression of otherworldly entities dancing in the darkness, infuse the narrative with an ethereal dimension evoking emotions that transcend the physical surroundings, depicting imagined space. The palm-marks of the virtuous woman and the headstone of Jatashankar become symbols with historic and socio-cultural significance. The rejection of patriarchy and the breaking of shackles by the Garasiya woman exemplify thirdspace, where real and imagined elements converge to

redefine societal norms. The gorge between Ambala and Ramdhari transforms into a site, where a woman's strength, bravery and humanity are immortalized.

The narrative "A Garasiya Woman" dictates the glory of an extremely courageous woman, who in her true sense proved herself to be of a bloodline of Kshatriya, the one belonging to the ruler or warrior class. Rupali, a young Garasiya lass of eighteen years of age and being fourth month pregnant, challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes with her exceptional bravery and unwavering resolve. Adorned with solid silver anklets secured tightly around her legs and bedecked with various ornaments, she was the daughter of Khumansang-jee, a squire from Pachchhegam village. She had been married into a family residing in the village of Hebatpar. Carrying a box of ornaments of gold worth five thousand rupees, she was returning from her husband's home, where she had gone to participate in the ceremony of seemant and was supposed to be escorted back to Pachchhegam, where she would stay until after her delivery.

Gemal, a Rajpoot living in Pachchhegam village, whom no one dared to attack and rob a vehicle under his protection, was considered as one of the best escorts amongst all the others situated in Gohilwad region. The escorts were the men who were employed by the Garasiya landholders on a salary basis to accompany wayfarers and protect them from anyone and everyone during their journey by bullock carts or horse wagons. Being an exceedingly arrogant and egocentric man, whenever someone would offer him with an assignment to escort their family, he would outrightly deny by stating, "I won't! I do not escort unless there is a grave risk! Gemal, that is I, escorts only those who carry ornaments worth a few thousand. I only go where I feel worthy as a chaperon! Well after all, scores of others escort around."

As cocky and big headed as he was, his escort was extremely difficult to come by, as he always refused to accept the offers given by unimportant ordinary folks, by disrespecting them and giving them impertinent answers while idling on a bedstead and inhaling hookah fumes. Due to his image of being fearless and valorous, he was once summoned by the overlord of the village, squire Khumansang-jee with an ox cart, two maids and an assistant guard to go to escort his daughter Rupali back to Pachchhegam from Hebatpar.

Gemal, who believed that no one can defeat and dare to attack him, started feeling drowsy as if he was being rocked in a cradle and immediately started snoring, covering

himself under the pacchedi sheet as the carts rolled out of the town. Even after being given multiple warnings by the cart driver and Rupali herself, to not to doze off and beware as it was a very dark night, he kept on mumbling the same thing again and again in arrogance, “Oaf! Don’t you know Gemal? No robber dares glance in the direction of Gemal! Don’t you know who I am, I am Gemal! Shut your trap and move on”.



Fig. 6 Rupali’s canopied coach being surrounded by twelve dacoits

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

Due to his ignorance, indifferent attitude and an act of extreme negligence, a heard of ten or twelve dacoits surrounded the canopied coach and let out a war cry by rolling him into a desert ball. After Gemal was thrown away, the robbers started making lecherous comments about Rupali’s body. She fought effortlessly without losing any kind of courage by pulling one of the batonlike stays loose and striking it on the heads of two robbers leaning over her leg, by cracking their skulls and making them lay in a heap on the earth. She handed over the box of ornaments to the dacoits but continued fighting courageously for the protection of her dignity in an animated state, even when her blood boiled, flames erupted from her eyes, her heart heaved and fell like bellows and the blood dripped from all over the body as she was no longer able to contain her wrath. She struck down all the robbers so powerfully that the prey instantly collapsed never to rise again.

A dose of opium extract was administered to her at Monpur, her maternal uncle’s home but she died with the blood oozing from her body after she reached her parents’ house, leaving an impeccable history behind her. By breaking all the stereotypes of the woman being delicate and needing a man for her protection, she resembled a fierce Jagdamba and Goddess Chandi on a moonless night. Her act of extreme strength, heroism

and bravery by fighting against the horde of ten dacoits and withstanding the barrage of their baton blows at such a tender age, illustrates that a woman possesses enough capabilities for protection of her dignity all by herself, under the most difficult circumstances and at any given point of time in her life.

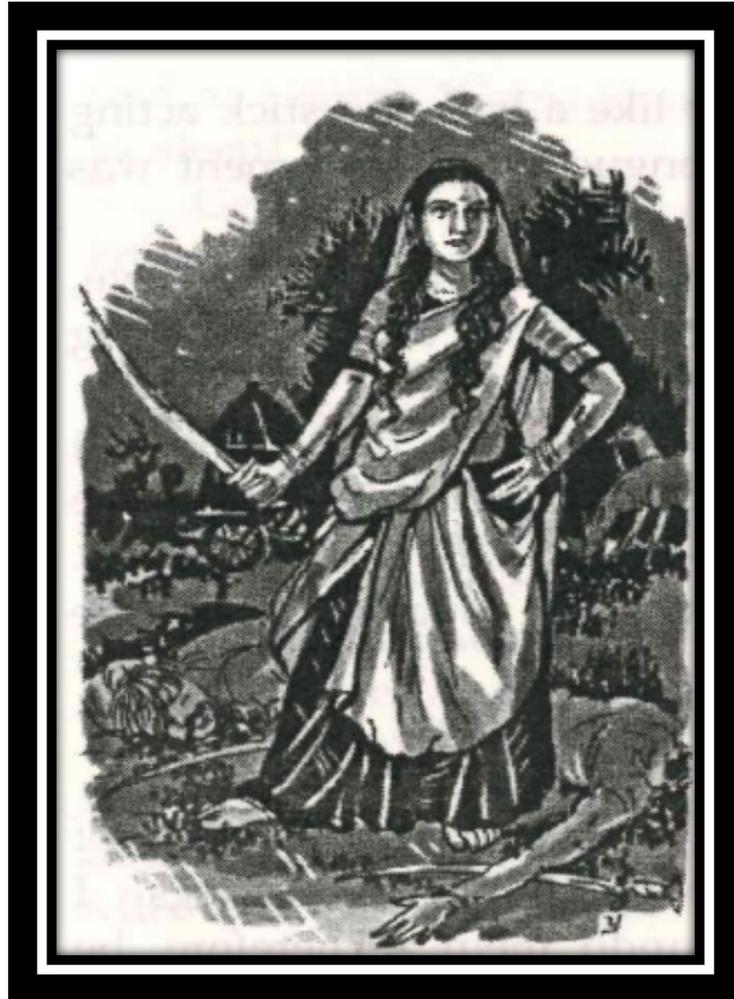


Fig. 7 Rupali, a true embodiment of Rajpoot Garasiya woman

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

This literary work delves into a multitude of central themes, each of which significantly contributes to the narrative's intricacy and overall impact. At its essence, the tale encapsulates the motif of female empowerment, accentuating the remarkable bravery and tenacity exhibited by the youthful protagonist, Rupali. Her actions exemplify a compelling affirmation of women's inherent resilience, challenging the prevailing societal expectations that frequently restrict them to submissive positions. The narrative also delves into the repercussions of unbridled arrogance and excessive self-assurance, which

is vividly exemplified through the character of Gemal, who proclaims himself as the finest escort. The individual's persistent neglect of his obligations, combined with his dependence on his established status, ultimately results in his public embarrassment and downfall, providing a profound insight into the significance of modesty and introspection.

The physical space is intricately depicted through geographical locations such as Pachchhegam and Hebatpar village, the Bhal desert and Monpur that serve as tangible settings grounding the narrative in a concrete reality. The anticipation of Rupali's return to Pachchhegam, the attack on the canopied coach, and the subsequent fight against dacoits infuse the narrative with emotionally charged scenes that transcend the physical surroundings representing imagined space in the narrative. Richard Schechner's concept of performance and ritual is evident in the ceremonial aspects of the narrative, such as the seemant ceremony of the protagonist, Rupali. These rituals play a crucial role in contributing to the overall cultural and social milieu depicted in the story. Rupali's defiance of traditional gender roles and stereotypes challenges the societal expectations imposed on women. Her courageous stand against the dacoits, coupled with the struggle for dignity, exemplifies a dimension where the real and the imagined converge, creating a transformative thirdspace in the narrative. Richard Schechner's concept of performance and ritual is evident in the ceremonial aspects of the narrative, such as the seemant ceremony of the protagonist, Rupali. These rituals play a crucial role in contributing to the overall cultural and social milieu depicted in the story.

The narrative "Raja Depal De" dictates the resplendence and glory of a great king named Depal-De, a staunchly religious man, who spent his sleepless nights one after the other in praying for rains to the Almighty for the birds, animals and people of his kingdom, who were starving without food and water. His acts equalized that of grandeur and greatness, showcasing him as the embodiment of an ideal king. Through his selfless actions and unwavering commitment to the well-being of his people, he leaves an indelible mark as a ruler of resplendence and greatness.

During one of his kingdom-wide inspections on horseback, the compassionate king came across a heart-wrenching scene. A farmer, grappling with extreme poverty, resorted to using his wife as a substitute for a deceased bullock to plough his fields. The woman, subjected to brutal beatings by her husband whenever she paused, exhibited red

blotches on her back akin to those on the bullock. Stricken by the pitiful sight, the king intervened, imploring the farmer to explain the reasoning behind this cruel act.



Fig. 8 Raja Depal-De jaunting around his kingdom

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

Upon learning of the farmer's dire circumstances and the urgency of sowing seeds, he swiftly took the action. He commanded his page to locate and bring a new bullock to replace the farmer's wife. Despite repeated requests to the farmer to wait for the replacement bullock, the cruel and unyielding man adamantly refused, "If you pity her so much, how about hitching yourself in her place? I'll unhitch her and hitch you! Why do you come here with empty words?" In an extraordinary display of greatness and humanity, the king, epitomising the essence of compassion, volunteered to be harnessed to the plough in the place of the suffering woman, stating, "Well! Very well! Come on, release her and hitch me!" The woman who was overwhelmed by seeing this spectre, continued blessing the king from the bottom of her heart with tears of gratitude and admiration, as he drew the plough till it covered a tract of the farm from one end to the another, until the

bullock was handed to the farmer, departing with a heavy heart. With the nature symbolizing his devotion and righteousness, sparkling and shining genuine pearls bulged in the place of grains on every footprint of a king, wherever he had ploughed the field.

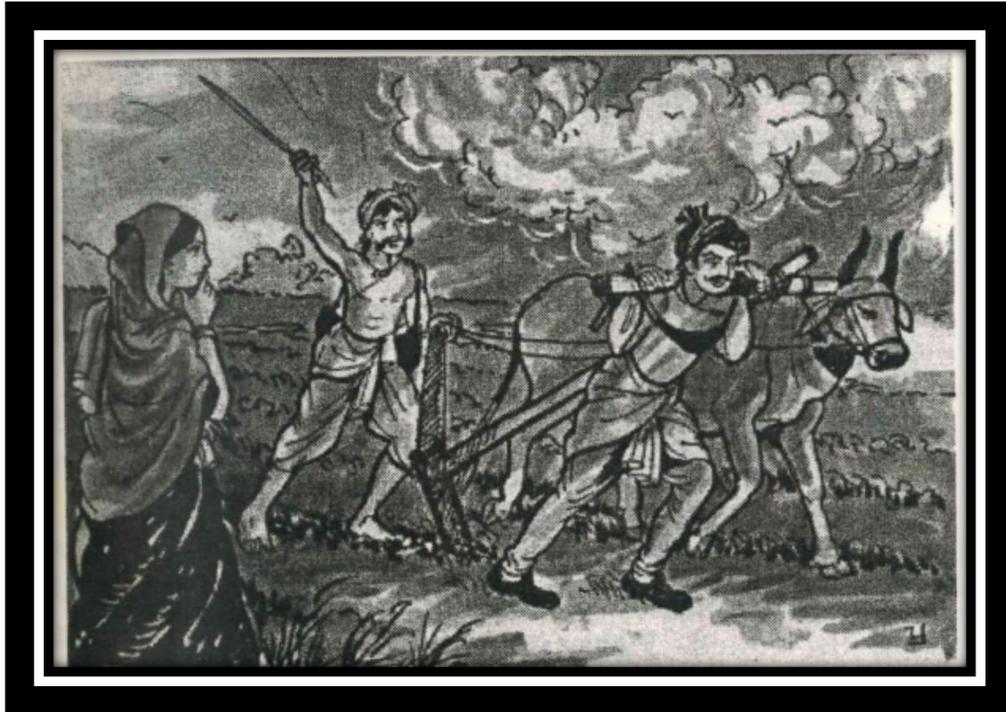


Fig. 9 The king hitching himself to plough the field -A true incarnation of Raam

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

After the ending of rainy season and with Diwali drawing closer, the king was sitting amidst a full court, listening to the distress and misery of his farmers, when suddenly a man entered the court, offering him a sack of pearls and requesting him to accept them, as they were the result of his divine deeds. The king bathing in a divine aura, not only returned the sack brought to him by the farmer, but also made him realize the value of his wife by explaining that the pearls were the produce of her dedicated perseverance. He taught him to adorn her with dignity and respect, by picking a pearl from a lot, touching it to his forehead and threading it around his neck.

The narrative unfolds within the physical space of a kingdom experiencing the harsh summer. The geographical locations and climatic conditions, such as rivers, farms and hills, contribute to the vivid depiction of the setting. As the story progresses, the temporal setting transitions through different months - Chaitra, Vaishakh and Jeth - marking the passage of time within the kingdom. The relentless heat and famine create a pervasive sense of desperation among the populace. The setting evolves with the arrival

of the month of Ashadh, ushering in the much-needed rains that transform the arid landscape into a verdant terrain. This shift in seasons plays a crucial role in the narrative, symbolizing renewal and hope. The relentless heat, famine and suffering evoke a shared emotional experience among the people, connecting them through a collective thread of hardship and desperation depicting imagined space in the narrative. The rain, a transformative element, serves as a thirdspace, turning the arid landscape into a velvety green expanse. The physical space is intertwined with the emotional relief and hope that the rain brings, creating a complex and layered experience that goes beyond the mere geographical surroundings. Lefebvre's concept of space in everyday life is intricately interwoven into the narrative, reflecting the harsh realities of the farmer, who resorts to using his wife as a makeshift bullock due to economic constraints. The king's intervention, offering to replace the woman with a bullock, introduces the spatial dynamics of power and hierarchy in the tale.

The narrative "A Daughter as Brave as a Son" challenges and redefines traditional gender roles and stereotypes, emphasizing that courage and valour are not limited by one's gender and that women can be just as brave as men when the need arises, encapsulating the transcendence of gender expectations and roles within the society. The story commences in Chalala town during a mourning feast, where the residents apprehensive of the formidable presence of Devat Vank, engage in sycophantic gestures in an attempt to gain favour. Instead of grieving, the mourners vied with one another in appeasing Devat Vank, the overlord of Gundala town, as the heart of every mourner quivered with fear of inviting his displeasure.

The overlord, serving as a representation of oppressive authority and personifying tyrannical power within the narrative, exhibits a subtle smile to convey his approval of gifts, as the individuals placated him with the offerings, "Squire Devat, here are a few packs of snuffed tobacco for your hookah. Soon as I happened to see the granules, I knew they were worthy of being smoked only by the exalted squire!," while another man standing up from the congregation approached him, "Squire Devat, a brand new hookah for you. It has been sheathed by weaving Ganga-Jamni wires especially for you. Things look good only when they are in worthy hands," "And this woollen saddle cover..., Squire Devat, on your mare it would rustle like silk. Won't itch her. Especially made for her, squire!" a third man came forward cajoling him. These dialogues become a precursor

to the overarching theme of subservience and fear that characterizes the societal interactions within the narrative, as antagonizing the squire meant only one thing; reduction of one's village into a relic in a matter of days.



Fig. 10 A village portal of Chalala town- People appeasing Devat Vank

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

However, Lakha Wala, the king of Lakhapadar town stands out by rejecting the established norms of bowing to authority and his submission to Devat, proclaiming, “All those born of Kathi seeds are equal. None big, none small! I can't bear this sycophancy!” His dissent not only challenges the established power dynamics but also underscores the potential hazards linked to unbridled control. His steadfast refusal to partake in flattery reflects Henry Lefebvre's idea of production of space, illustrating the repercussions of tyrannical governance and the inherent risks involved in opposing individuals of higher power, especially when that dominance is exercised with arrogance and self-importance, as demonstrated by Devat Vank. Additionally, his belief in the equality of all Kathis adds a layer of conviction to his difference of opinion, accentuating the aspects of social change and defying tradition within the narrative. This act serves as a catalyst for the subsequent events, establishing the base for the central theme of aversion against authoritarian standards of society.

Further, the narrative unfolds in the idyllic settings of Lakhapadar, a tranquil and picturesque village cradled by the serenity of rivers that weave a natural web around its boundaries, especially during the rainy season when brooks and rivulets meander through the landscape, whose foundation had been laid by king Lakhawala, belonging to Dhanani

sub-clan of the Kathis. The presence of Nirmal Kund, carved by the nature itself to receive water from the waterfalls and the wildlife including peacocks perching on the Banyan trees, crocodiles throwing up water fountains in the deeper pools and tiny fish shimmering in the brook adds to the harmonious coexistence of both the awe-inspiring and the tender facets of nature, making Lakhapadar a visual marvel amidst the peaceful embrace of nature's beauty. The village serves as an emblematic symbol of lived spaces, where customs and communal bonds are intricately woven into the tapestry of daily life, indicating that individuals born in this terrain were also once upon a time, formidable yet gentle and intrepid yet affectionate folks.

The aesthetic glamour of village portrayed with meticulous and evocative descriptions, strikes the thematic contradiction between visual appeal and an imminent sense of danger. The principled stance practiced by Lakha Wala invokes the wrath of Devat, resulting in a devastating attack on Lakhapadar village. The climax unfolds as he attempts to seize the prized colt, prompting Heer-bai, a young daughter of the king to take the center stage in the absence of him. The ballad of Tejmal Thakor resonating through her ears, serves as a cultural anchor providing her inspiration and strength.

*A crisp letter arrived, O Dada, from the Eastern land!  
And Dada asked someone at the portal to read it!  
Uncle read and Dada wept  
From the balcony peeped Tejal and asked:  
Why're you weeping, O my Dada, do tell me!  
Daughter, here're the raiders and none to defend!  
With seven daughters, are you a barren male, O Dada?  
Brace your heart, O Dada! We seven'd fight them all!.....*

The recollection of Tejmal's raas ballad symbolizes oral traditions, shaped by the cultural and historical narratives woven into the song. It serves as a pivotal moment of evolution, invoking the spirit of valiant daughters and challenging the normative expectations placed upon her gender. She defends her family and village against the menacing squire of Gundala town by seizing a spear, lifting it with both hands and forcefully thrusting it into his back, invoking the name of the Mother goddess as she firmly puts him into the ground. The character of Devat, embodied by his arrogance and

an insatiable desire for ascendancy, ultimately becomes the cause of his downfall. Her remarkable act of impaling him with a spear not only halts the invasion, but also serves as a potent illustration of dismantling gender stereotypes.

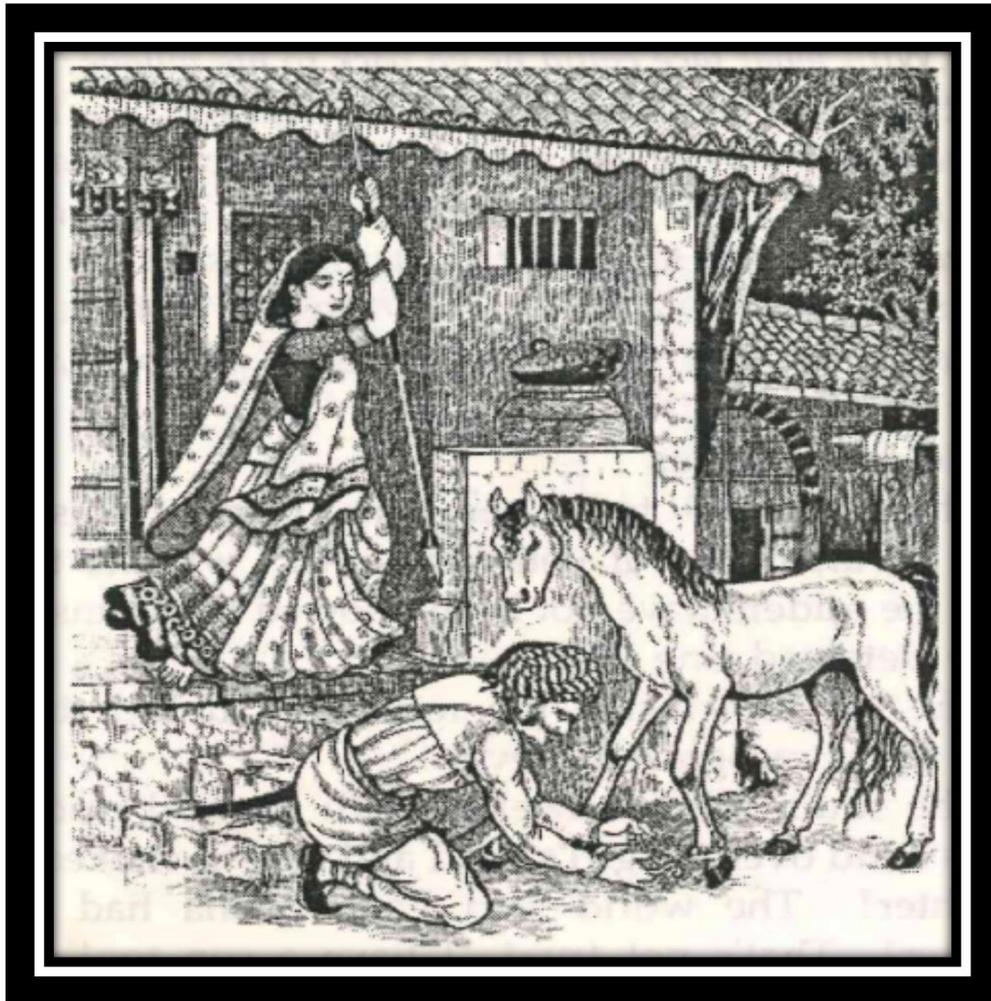


Fig. 11 Heer-bai piercing spear on Devat Vank

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

After the incident, Gadhavi was summoned by Heer-Bai to go over to Chalala town to inform the squire of the loot by Devat. Upon receiving the message, Lakhawala felt as if heavens had fallen apart. He immediately rode home to Lakhapadar from Chalala, where he had gone to mediate in a dispute between its overlord, Oghad Wala and his nephew. As Heer-bai led him inside the room and undid the bale, stating, “All I want to tell you is that the raiders have not been allowed to go unscathed. I have detained one here.” After recognising the frozen eyes of Devat, his heart swelled with joy and pride, as he acknowledged Heer-bai as his son, stating, “Daughter! The world said Lakha Wala had only a daughter! That’s not true! I have a son too.”

The narrative goes beyond celebrating her bravery, serving as a representation of a larger societal transformation in which the perceived constraints imposed by gender are deconstructed through the questioning of established norms that restrict women to predetermined roles; advocating for a more inclusive understanding of courage, strength and heroism irrespective of gender. In a society where gender biases continue to exist, her act becomes a beacon of empowerment, ushering in a paradigm shift and providing a compelling argument for the title's aptness, celebrating the indomitable spirit of daughters as equals to sons.

The narrative's physical space encompasses the spheres of Chalala town and Lakhapadar village. Chalala, serves as a space for societal rituals and power dynamics, highlighting the tangible dimensions of authority, particularly in the fear-driven interactions with Devat Vank. Lakhapadar, a tiny hamlet situated on river Shel is ensconced amidst the verdant embrace of mango groves, punctuated by the melodious cadence of cascading waterfalls aptly named "Ganga Falling from a Cow's Mouth." Accompanied by the adjacent Shiv-linga and a profusion of pink Karen blossoms, this picturesque setting creates a serene and enchanting ambiance. It serves as the crucible for the unfolding narrative, shaping thematic currents that traverse the societal fabric within the story. Heer-bai's daring act of impaling Devat with a spear serves as a transformative nexus, challenging societal norms. It signifies a breaking point in the narrative, where the intersection of physical and imagined spaces sparks societal re-evaluation, becoming a dynamic arena where tradition is questioned and new possibilities unfold.

The narrative "A Horserace" unfolds within the rustic expanse of Lakhavad village, portraying the daily lives and experiences of its inhabitants. The depiction of a recluse residing at its outskirts, diligently performing religious duties and maintaining the shrine, adds a layer of lived space characterized by the routine practices and spiritual engagements, capturing the tangible essence of everyday life. Its central concept revolves around the interplay of competition, strategy and social expectations, emerging as an insightful exploration of rural Kathiyawad's cultural dynamics. The story initiates with a recluse proposing for the horserace, driven by the relentless admiration and persistent acclaim for Lakhi, a mare owned by Squire Luna Khachar by challenging him, "Squire Luna, I want to race my mare with yours, today!" Luna, who was seemingly amused by the proposition, initially resisted, "O bawa-jee! Revered Patron mine! How can my Lakhi,

a hag that she is, race with your winged angel? I am a poor nobody. Please don't insist on humiliating me bawa-jee." However, the priestly recluse, driven by a strong desire to showcase the prowess of his thoroughbred filly, responded to his reluctance, insisting, "No, squire. That won't do. Every day, for years on, visitors to the shrine have been laying it thick and racking my ears with flattering words about your Lakhi. 'Hah! What a mare! No charger can overtake Lakhi!' They keep nagging me to no end with their babble. I am, therefore, hell-bent on having a measure of your Lakhi, today. Squire, not for nothing I've put in six years of drudgery grooming my flighty. Come on. Get saddled." Perplexed by the incessant praise, he accepts the challenge, fuelling his rising desire to showcase his most prized possession. This leads the narrative into a labyrinth of clever navigation and strategic diversion, setting in motion a captivating saga of wit, humor and societal subversion.

The inciting episode transpires in Kothi town, serving as the locus for Luna's contemplation. His skilful manoeuvring of circumstances, notably the staged kidnapping of the mayor's son at the periphery of Limbadi, introduces a layer of complexity, signifying a strategic understanding of human psychology and the performative nature intrinsic to communal interactions. His adept manipulation of situations demonstrates a keen comprehension of yearning for public recognition, thereby serving as an analogy for cultural norms and the extent to which individuals are willing to strive in order to validate their value or captivate others. The ensuing chase through demanding terrains showcased his audacity and Lakhi's remarkable abilities, turning a simple race into a spectacle of bizarre incidents, as the drums broke *Kading.... dheen! Kading.... dheen!*, signalling a battle alert from the rampart of the fortress of Limbadi as five hundred horsemen rode out in the pursuit of pair of thieves within minutes.

His strategic acumen unfolded as he deftly led them through dense shrubbery and treacherous landscapes, confounding his pursuers. The chase against the backdrop of the fading daylight and resonating hooves intensified in suspense as he directed his mare, Lakhi, along a trail through thorny swamps, leaving them floundering amidst the dreadful wetlands. In a pivotal moment, the panic-stricken recluse pleaded to him from the stream, seeking resolution to their race. Responding with composure, he extended his hand, hoisting the recluse onto Lakhi and spurring the mare into a lightning gallop, leaving the onlookers in a state of bewilderment.



Fig. 12 Luna blazing through the shrubberies after the kidnapping of Mayor's son

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

The subsequent escape, marked by the mare's vanishing hoofbeats, culminated in his gracious reception of the riders at his manor, where he revealed his thoughtfully executed plan stating, "I say, my friends! His holiness the recluse was hell bent on racing his filly with my Lakhi. 'Let's race our mares. We must!' he kept pestering me. Now this Lakhi mine is a weird one. She always wants spectators to watch her perform. In this race how could she show off? To whom? And had I come to you and invited you to ride with me to watch the race, would all the five hundred of you have come? My sole motive was to draw you out to watch us race. Of course, every grain of gold on this boy's body is sacred as a holy cow to me. I very well knew that he was about to be spliced. Had I stripped him, the Sun-God won't have forgiven me." Admiring the prank played by Luna to draw the spectators, the horsemen rode back to Limbadi with the bridegroom the next morning. In the aftermath, Luna continued to playfully send words to the recluse proposing races, "I say, bawa-jee: how about racing our mares?," perpetuating the legacy of his unconventional encounter.

The title unveils itself as a nuanced narrative, that transcends the literal confines of a mere equestrian competition by delving into the intricacies of human agency and the artistry of speculation, wherein situations unfold not solely for competitive ends but to influence the perceptions of others. Motivated by a desire to transcend the ordinary, the horserace metamorphoses into into an allegory for life's theatricality and performance,

with the recluse inadvertently becoming a strategic player in the moves and decisions taken by his opponent. The theme of rivalry surfaces throughout the entire storyline, profoundly exemplifying the fluid interplay between ego and pride. In its strategic unfolding, the plot employs various facets of irony and humour, injecting a lighter tone without diluting its thematic depth.

The physical or real space is vividly depicted through the various geographical locations that serve as the backdrop for the narrative's unfolding events in the rural setting, where a recluse lived at the temple on the outskirts of Lakhavad village. The initial exchange between the main characters unfolds in the vibrant atmosphere of Kothi town, where Luna agrees for the horserace, establishing the atmosphere for the subsequent twists and turns in the story. He leads the recluse on an intricate journey through various villages, ultimately arriving at the pivotal location of Limbadi marking a crucial turn in the narrative. The climax materializes at a bluff, poised above a stream, where Luna, in a bid to outsmart his pursuers, elegantly directs his mare across the meandering river. The resolution takes place in Kothi, where he skilfully handles the situation, ensuring the secure repatriation of the mayor's son. This phenomenon effectively completes the narrative arc, re-establishing a connection with its initial point of origin. Notably, he later dispatches Lakhi once again with his son to Limbadi for the conveyance of the groom's well-being, assuring the townsfolk of his return the following morning. The thoughtful selection of these various locations adds a nuanced dimension to narrative spaces, both strategically and aesthetically enhancing the evolving events.

The imagined space unfolds as a vibrant tapestry woven with a myriad of emotions, intricately transforming the horserace into a mesmerizing display that ensnares the collective attention of the townspeople. Within this conceptual realm, the race transcends mere physicality, taking on symbolic significance and inviting a range of interpretations, creating a shared experience that binds the community in a collective narrative. The thirdspace emerges as a liminal realm where the horserace embodies cultural, social and individual significance. It exists at the intersections of Luna's tactics, going beyond physical confines. This lively and contested zone blurs conventional boundaries, creating a layered narrative that offers a unique storytelling experience by providing a space of convergence and divergence.



Fig. 13 Squire Chaitara Karpada sarcastically displaying the hospitality provided to him at Bhadali town

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

The narrative “Hospitality” unfurls as a profound exploration of the rich cultural tapestry within the Kathi community, accentuating the manifold facets of generosity. This tale emerges as a vibrant and multifaceted force closely associated with the entices of pride, revenge, redemption, cultural dynamics and the transformative power vested in the hands of women, collectively shaping the relationships in unforeseen and compelling ways. The story unfolds in the vibrant market of Bhadali town, where a seemingly inconsequential event involving Squire Chitara Karapada and Squire Bhan Khachar serves as the impetus for a confrontation driven by their respective egos. Rather than succumbing to immediate retribution, Chitara elevates the matter to a communal level, heaping disgrace on the entire village and symbolically carrying the same spear through Bhadali, announcing, “This is just a sample of the hospitality meted out to me at the house of Squire Bhan Khachar! Bhadali town is, no doubt, renowned for its warm welcome to its guests. I am taking along a specimen of bounty to display it among the three sub-clans of Kathis.” His overt act of disdain, wielding a spear embellished with a loaf of bread and an onion, sets the stage for Bhan’s measured response.

In preparation for his forthcoming visit to Kanbavya, Chitara diligently arranges an elaborate demonstration of hospitality. Every minute detail is thoughtfully attended, ranging from the perpetual smouldering of braziers to the careful milking of specially tended buffaloes. His exceptional foresight and preparedness for his arrival is succinctly expressed in the cautionary statement, “Beware! Bhan is bound to drop in unannounced so that he could find fault with the hospitality and discredit me. He is sure to come.”

At the heart of the narrative lies the cordiality extended by Chitara's wife and the women of the village to Bhan and his horsemen. The key interactions, such as his inquiry upon his arrival in Kanbavya, "Is Squire Chitara at home?" and the courteous reply from the lady of the house, "The master is away, but he hasn't taken his home along with him. I swear you by Sun-God to stay as our guest," serve as prime illustrations of sophisticated protocols and exemplification of refined formalities extended with great elegance and finesse. These interactions mark the initial exchanges, establishing the foundation for the convoluted interplay of dignity and humility.

As Bhan and his entire clan are welcomed into Kanbavya, the story progresses with diligent representations of greeting the guests, ranging from delectable offerings to opium-induced camaraderie. The horses were provided with precise care, which involved the attachment of pouches filled with abundant millet around their snouts, enabling them to munch the feed at their leisure. Concurrently, the village became abuzz with the activity as opium was carefully processed and converted into an extract, initiating a symphony of blazing stoves in every kitchen. In the manor, the passageway's whitewashed walls were decorated with silk-embroidered tapestries and kaleidoscopic ceiling plaques, while doors and windows were adorned with festooned Asopalav leaves, where one hundred Kathis were seated in two rows facing each other along the corridor. The meal consisted of bowls filled with rice, ground sugar and milk, which were served alongside freshly baked wheat rotis soaked in ghee. The esteemed attendees were catered to until satisfaction, and each of them were provided with a rosewood bedstead for an afternoon repose. After their rest, another session of opium consumption, condensed to finger-thick consistency ensued. The evening unveiled yet another lavish feast, thereby culminating a day characterized by extravagant displays of amiability.

As the visitors expressed their desire to leave, the lady of the household calmly pleaded, "Patron, if you leave, I shall be scolded by the master on his return home." Following that, the women of the village demonstrating their exceptional culinary skills were witnessed in the subsequent days. Scrupulous preparations were made to serve a selection of exquisite curries, including those made from papadi, stems of Bawal trees, cacti of the Hathala variety, Paraboliya and froths of milk. The assortment of unique confections comprised of onion and milk pudding, artisanal sugared loaves adorned with patterns imprinted by the hands of women, Baraj made from vermicelli and Harisa-a milk

toffee with a surface shiny enough to reflect one's face. Every meal elicited a sense of awe among the visitors, prompting them to engage in deep contemplation as they savoured each bite. The mysterious ingredients of these delicacies remained elusive to most, enhancing the aura of culinary enchantment woven into the fabric of Kanbavya's enhanced hospitality. This meticulous grandeur of opulent feasts seamlessly incorporates Richard Schechner's concept of performance into the narrative, as the women participate in a performative display, elevating it into a cultural spectacle.

The narrative's climax, marked by Chitara's symbolic act of turning sugar into a well-blended sherbet, symbolizes the elevation of welcoming the guests with benevolence and redefinition of perspectives, that signifies the resurgence of reception into an art form by encompassment of profound experiences. His expression, "When again shall I be privileged to host Squire Bhan Khachar?" marks his triumph, revealing how hospitality, when wielded with subtlety and grace, possesses the power to redefine relationships. The modest means of the Kanbavya women outshined the traditional norms, as their exorbitant feasts, exotic sweets and sincere gestures illustrated graciousness that surpasses material wealth. Moreover, the plot demonstrates an unparalleled contribution of women in shaping one's household, as encapsulated by squire Bhan Khachar in the narrative, "Squire, after all, a house is judged by the woman occupying its chamber." During the denouement, Bhan, recognising the profound significance of Chitara's reaction and feeling thoroughly humbled, whispered almost to himself, "Chitara has a right to display the loaf and the onion atop his spear. He has redefined hospitality." The story unfolds as a journey of reformative altruism, where Bhan, expecting retaliation, experiences unprecedented magnanimity, leading to re-valuation of his preconceptions, illustrating the power of elevated courtesy and welcoming traditions in resolving the issues.

The narrative of "Hospitality" unfolds across a multitude of locations, offering a nuanced exploration of physical spaces in the story. The vibrant market square in Bhadali serves as the backdrop for this thought-provoking act, witnessed by the Kathi crowd, setting the tone for the subsequent occurrences. The streets of both Bhadali and Kanbavya serve as symbolic arenas, where facets of hospitality are enacted and the perceived offences are addressed. The emphasis of the narrative eventually transitions to Kanbavya village, where a cultural showcase of abundance and refinement, redefines the essence of

welcoming guests. In the resolution, the story returns to the village of Bhadali, where Squire Bhan Khachar returns after being greatly satisfied by the display of innovative courtesy and goodwill. The Thirdspace in the narrative materializes through the theme of hospitality itself, epitomizing a cultural oasis that transcends physical boundaries. The vibrant market of Bhadali and the serene kitchens of Kanbavya serve as canvas of lived space, where the Kathi community paints an emotional landscape of evolutionary traditions. The reactions of the visitors, their contemplation during meals and their reflections on the warmth provided to them contribute to the perceived space. This dimension delves into how individuals within the narrative subjectively engage with, and make meaning of the spaces they inhabit. Here, the convergence of heartfelt hospitality and spatial surroundings become a poetic expression, enriching the story's depth and ethnic significance.

The narrative "The Deed" encapsulates the arduous journey of the characters, shedding light on the complex nature of human connections that shape the story's profundity. Orphaned in his formative years, he inherits not just the ancestral property but also the weight of a warrior lineage that pulses through his veins, etching lines of determination on a face weathered by the toil of rural life. Familial expectations come to the forefront through Raaj-ba's parents' imposing demands, propelling the young man into a fervent struggle to secure a future with his beloved. The eponymous deed unravels as a convoluted tapestry of emotional sacrifice and financial tribulations, as the young man grapples with the formidable ultimatum imposed by his betrothed belle's parents. Raaj-ba, initially introduced as a young maiden in her parents' home, envisions a future with her pauper husband-to-be, the central protagonist. His firm resolve to meet an exorbitant dowry within a stringent timeframe thrusts him into a realm of profound challenges, highlighting David Harvey's concept of the social production of space, where financial constraints shape the characters' trajectories.

Economic adversity becomes a defining facet of his character as he confronts the daunting task of securing her hand in marriage, turning the ancestral estate into both a physical and metaphorical stage for his struggles by mortgaging it. The thirdspace in the narrative emerges through the emblematic dimensions of 'the deed' itself. The deed, initially a legal document delineating monetary settlements, transcends its literal confines to become a symbol of love tested by adversity. The unconventional demand outlined in

the contract, dictating how the young man should regard his wife until the debt is repaid, represents a negotiated space, where the characters navigate and redefine their identities, challenging traditional expectations and fostering a unique connection that transcends the rigid boundaries of social constructs. The devotion of the young man shines throughout the tale, as he doesn't alter from the promise of treating his wife as a mother or a sister made at the time of signing the agreement until the repayment of one thousand rupees. On the other side, rooted in plain simplicity, Raaj-ba symbolizes independence and self-creation within her own crafted world after the wedding. Transitioning from her opulent upbringing to her husband's modest shack, her resilience becomes evident as she indulges in the daily chores of sweeping the floor and adorning the house with tapestries. Her actions reflect a commitment to her new life, further emphasized in evening scenes of preparing meals and fanning her husband. However, the enigmatic presence of a sword on their bed adds complexity, creating the element of suspense in the narrative.



Fig. 14 The Deed

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

The revelation of a significant deed becomes a turning point, showcasing her remarkable acceptance and fortitude. From a dreamy young girl to a resolute woman, her audacious proposal to sell ornaments and embark on a warrior's journey together challenges traditional norms, underscoring her boldness and indomitable spirit.

Collaboratively shouldering financial responsibilities with her husband, their shared odyssey becomes an exploration of the nexus between individual aspirations and societal constraints. This dynamic portrayal of Raaj-ba as a fierce woman fighting battles in male attire and saving the emperor from the lecherous attack of a lion, adds a layer of convolution to the thematic fabric, signifying the fluidity and limitations surrounding gender roles. The climax occurs during a stormy night beneath the palace balcony, where her true identity as a woman is exposed when she reacts emotionally to spilled milk. The emperor's generosity and the subsequent return of the couple to their native village close the narrative loop marking the completion of their marital bliss.

In this rich and critical analytical framework, the narrative delves into the multifaceted aspects of socio-economic disparities, familial expectations, love, sacrifice, interplay of gender roles, dreams and identity. The physical or real space is vividly depicted through the rural settings, with the primary location being the ancestral property inherited by the protagonist upon his father's demise. This estate, described as timeworn and in ruins, stands as a crucial parable for dilapidated state of his hopes and dreams. The interaction with the moneylender and the creditor's drafting of a deed takes place in a tiny hamlet within the confines of the office, imbuing the space with a sense of contractual gravity and pressure. The imagined space emerges through the transformative journey of the young man and Raaj-ba. Her entry into his house as a bride and the act of reframing the humble shack by cleaning, renovating and decorating it, reflects the lived spaces, where everyday dreams and mundane aspects of life intersect, serving as a tangible representation of their evolving love story. This change in setting, from a desolate dwelling to a warm, heritage-infused home, mirrors the couple's journey, where emotions are intimately connected with geographical locations. The perceived space is embodied through various kingdoms and the emperor's cavalcade encountered by the couple during their struggle for seeking employment, that weaves a tapestry of sensory experiences within their physical surroundings, reflecting the immediate and observable facets of the spaces they traverse.

The narrative, "In the Witness of the Sun and the Moon," serves as an entangled tapestry of celestial symbolism and legal complexities set during the reign of Ra' Desal, the Third, in the kingdom of Kuchchh. This evocative phrase, embedded in a loan deed, not only denotes the relevance of the financial agreement but also introduces a

transcendental layer, implying a reliance on celestial entities as impartial arbiters of truth. The esteemed mansion, acting as the primary stage, becomes a crucible for legal intricacies, shedding light on the intrinsic challenges within human affairs.

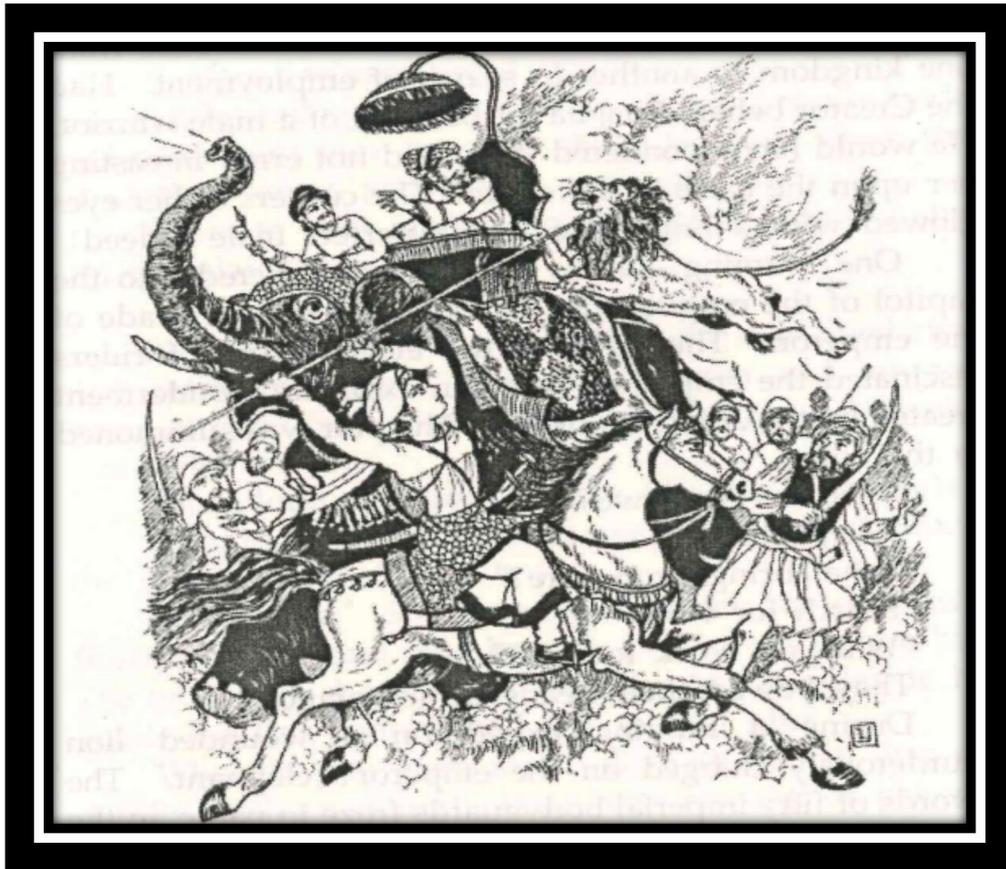


Fig. 15 The Rajpoot woman warrior saving the emperor from the lecherous attack of a lion

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

The central theme of justice is revealed as the distressed farmer seeks redress at the portal, presenting the loan deed as a testament of his repayment to the moneylender. This quest for justice amplifies as the king, embodying the paragon of truth, scrutinizes the document against the sunlight, revealing a hidden watermark and unravelling the deception. The celestial symbolism embodied in the expression 'In the Witness of the Sun and the Moon' introduces an ethereal dimension, probing into cosmic allegory and the function of these entities as observers in human transactions. This interplay of light, shadow and earthly matters encapsulates the complicated investigation of veracity and concealment. The sun, figuratively serving as an illuminator of hidden verities, emerges as a metaphorical catalyst in untangling the knots of the multifaceted strata of legal dispute.



Fig. 16 The king warning the moneylender to confess his fraudulent act

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

Summoning the moneylender, the king gives him an opportunity to confess, but the cunning individual remains obstinate, relying on the document's apparent legitimacy. The king, however, persists, warning him of severe consequences. The climax of the narrative unfolds, as he learns about the fraudulent technique employed by the moneylender to erase the crossed ink. Disheartened by his misuse of intelligence, he chastises him for employing deceit for personal gain and sentences him to three years in prison for his actions. This narrative serves as a cautionary tale about the repercussions of dishonesty and the misuse of one's capabilities. It emphasizes the importance of discernment, ethical conduct and the pursuit of justice in maintaining a fair and just society.

The first space, the physical or real space, is prominently portrayed through the geographical locations within the kingdom of Kuchchh. The initial setting is the regal manor, where the king spends a sleepless night scuffling with a contentious loan

disagreement. The concluding sequence takes place within the portico of this royal palace, where the king engages in a confrontation with the moneylender about the deceitful erasure of the ink. Henceforth, the resolution of the dispute, the sentencing of the moneylender and the pronouncement of justice occur in this particular setting. The distressed farmer's quest for justice at the portal of the mansion illustrates the emotional depth embedded in the imagined space, where the portal becomes a symbolic threshold for seeking redress and fairness.

“Magnanimous Foes” serves as a compelling title for the narrative as it encapsulates the drastic transformation of the relationship between Raam Khachar and Bhoka Wala. The term ‘magnanimous’ denotes a generosity of spirit, a willingness to forgive and an ability to rise above petty conflicts. Raam Khachar, a prominent figure in this narrative, hailing from Chotila town is depicted as a distinguished Kathi warrior with a commanding presence. His countenance reflects weathered experience, marked by the lines etched on the forehead with the tales of battles fought. His role as a leader is emphasized through strategic decision-making, exemplified by the venture to ransack Malshika and the subsequent confrontation with Bhoka Wala, hailing from Munjar town.

The essence of pacification takes center stage as Raam Khachar and Bhoka Wala, initially portrayed as enemies, forge an unforeseen alliance to rescue Gigi from the lecherous overlord of Halwad. Raam's internal conflicts, particularly when faced with the ethical dilemma of rescuing his daughter, showcase the moral complexities inherent in his persona. Bhoka Wala's unexpected act of aiding him in rescuing Gigi reveals layers of his character, illustrating a profound and resonant portrayal, where the adversaries recognize a higher purpose beyond personal vendettas, outlining the benevolence that can emerge amidst historical strife. The story unravels through a thoughtful examination of honor, loyalty and the complexities inherent in human connections, exemplifying a noble reconciliation that challenges conventional norms, surpassing mere animosity. The thematic shifts reflected in peaceful landscapes, war zones and diplomatic encounters contribute to a contemplative exploration of the multifaceted human conditions in the narrative.



Fig. 17 Magnanimous Foes

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

In this narrative, the physical space unfolds against a diverse backdrop, with the initial scene taking place by the Satalli River outside Munjasar town, where Raam Khachar and his Kathi warriors pause for respite, engaging in both religious and cleansing rituals in the crystal-clear waters. This location serves as the starting point for Raam's venture and becomes the stage for diplomatic exchanges between him and Bhoka Wala. Chotila, functioning as the epicenter of Raam Khachar's operations, assumes paramount importance as the point of departure and return for the Kathi warriors' expedition. The strategic plundering of Malshika during the narrative serves as a principal incident, accentuating the scholarly examination of the ever-changing settings as the warriors traverse multiple trajectories. Halwad, initially an unremarkable locale, evolves into a site of tension and conflict, symbolizing the distressing captivity of Gigi, Raam Khachar's daughter. Motichand's mansion within Halwad becomes an embodiment of power struggles and moral quandaries, enriching the imagined space with layers of complexity.

The transformation of Halwad from an ordinary town to a site of tension and heightened emotions symbolizes David Harvey's production of space, depicting how

social and moral dynamics actively reshape the narrative setting. The ridge of Lambadhar in this context emerges as a conceived space, strategically selected to serve as a commanding vantage point for the Kathi warriors in their impending confrontation with Bhoka Wala's men. This elevated terrain is a product of thoughtful planning, embodying a calculated decision to gain tactical advantage. On the other hand, the gritty nature of battlefield transcends mere conception, evolving into a lived space where the palpable reality of alliances is being tested and the narrative reaching its zenith is experienced. The meticulous attention to geographical details imparts a sense of realism and depth, elevating the overall immersive experience. The juxtaposition of serene riverbanks, bustling towns and intense battlefields culminates the varied nature of the Saurashtra's existence, while the shifts in settings reflect the changes in tone and thematic exploration of the narrative.

The narrative "The Killer of His Son" deftly articulates the unforeseen tragedy that befalls Mandodarkhan's progeny. Positioned as the overlord in a rustic milieu, he serves as the squire of a modest village named Davaliya, a Muslim belonging to the Molesalam sect with ancestral roots in the Rathod clan of the raajpoots. Laying claim to only a singular village, he remains exempted from being considered as a wealthy man, yet his regal stature magnetically draws a diverse array of talents, including artisans, dancers, minstrels, folk singers and actors, akin to a hive attracting bees. The narrative develops amidst the lively setting of a vibrant festive day, where his manor courtyard, though pulsating with exuberance, finds itself inadequately spacious to accommodate the deluge of visitors, each harboring with high expectations of gifts and doles. This scenario not only highlights his influential position but also underscores the inherent challenges tethered to his esteemed status.

*Amba Moriya ji ke kesu koriya,  
Chitta chakoriya ji ke fagan foriya.  
Foriya fagan, pavan har-far, mahu amba Moriya,  
Dhan rag gave fag ghar ghar, jhate pavan joriya;  
Gallal jholi, ramat holi, rang gop ramavanan,  
Akhant Radha, neh badha, vrajj Madha avanan!  
Ji vrajj Madha avanan!*

*[Mango trees have blossomed, kesu flowers are in full bloom and hearts have become buoyant as Fagan exudes its fragrance in the air.*

*Fragrant Fagan, wafting breeze, blooming mahu and mango trees,*

*Wives humming motley Faag songs and filling the homes, frequent gusty gales;*

*Sacks of powdered vermilion, revelry of smearing colors;*

*'You who lured the shepherd boys to play the festive Holi', says Radha,*

*O Madhav, You Who is bound by love, come to Vraj, Oh, please do come!]* Top of Form

Henri Lefebvre's concept of space in everyday life intricately weaves into the narration, reflecting various emotions and spheres of existence as the tale transpires amidst the lively setting of the Fagan festival, where holi revellers regaled dabbing one another with colours at the portal of the village. Frenzied to the utmost and hooting wildly, the villagers ran about smearing one another with mud, dung and all the muck they could put their hands on. Against the backdrop of this joyous and the spirited post-Holi festivities of Dhuleti, a tragedy strikes when a stranger in pristine attire becomes the inadvertent focus of exuberant revellers. As they swarm around, smearing colors and revelling in the mayhem, he pleads desperately, "Please don't smear me! Be good and don't soil my clothes, I beg of you all!" The villagers, caught up in the fervour of the festival, remain relentless, chanting,

"Smear him well!"

"Dab him so ugly that he won't recognize himself!"

"Come on bring the muck and the soot!"

In the chaos that ensued, a tragedy occurred as the stranger's sword unintentionally inflicted a fatal injury resulting in the accidental death of the overlord's cherished eight-year-old son. Unveiling life's unpredictable nature, the narrative delves into the remarkable themes of fate and destiny, underscoring the far-reaching impact that seemingly insignificant actions can entail. As the news reached the regal palace of Mandodarkhan, grief-stricken yet remarkably composed, he clucked his prized and majestic mare, Rozadi, and shot out like an arrow, scanning the plateau for the killer of his son. Riding bareback and wielding a sword, he embarked on a pursuit after the assumed perpetrator of the tragic incident. The stranger, realizing the imminent threat of

the squire on the horseback, contemplated the futility of escape. He kept running until he heard the hooves of the mare behind him. When he finally substantiated that his death was inevitable, he thought to himself, "How far he could run away from a rider? And when the death stared in the face, why struggle in vain?" He stood still and recognizing the gravity of the situation, decided to confront his fate, taking up his sword and holding it against his own throat. The overlord, interpreting his desperate action, understood that the man hailed from a community that resorted to self-injury as a weapon. Discerning the potential for the stranger to tarnish the outskirts of the village with his blood by inflicting harm upon himself, he reined on his mare, and not wanting that to happen within his domain, asked the man from a safe distance about his identity and purpose of coming to the village.

The stranger, identified as a Charan, unfolded a tale of misfortune, revealing, "My doom led me here!.... At home all my buffaloes are dead, my hungry kids're crying for a bowl of milk or porridge...I wouldn't have come..... but my woman pushed me..." After listening to this, when enquired by squire about the tragic incident involving the prince, the Charan responded with uncertainty, stretching his arms against the sky. "God knows! I don't know. All I know is that I wanted to go to the manor and meet the squire. Ashamed of looking like a tramp in tatters, I had brought along the set of freshly laundered clothes, the only one I have. I had changed into them on the outskirts of the village before the final leg of the journey to the overlords' manor. When the revellers mobbed to dab me with colours and spatter me with filth, I held out my scabbarded sword in front of me to keep them at a distance so that my clothes would not be soiled. In the clouds of dust and sleek of muck I could not see when the scabbard came loose and fell off."

In an unexpected turn of compassion, the squire rather than succumbing to a maelstrom of rage and vengeance, unbridled his mare, threw his sword far away and offering the horse to the Charan, urged him to escape, "Minstrel, come here. Take this. My mare. Mount her and get scarce." When the Charan, who felt initially sceptical and was left in disbelief, Mandodarkhan insisted, "Minstrel, there is no time to talk this over. Do you see what I see? The entire village is almost upon you. You have killed the prince. The moment they catch you, they would chop you into fragments tiny as mustard seeds." Unable to believe his fate, the Charan when asked Mandodarkhan about his identity, he replied, "The only name is that of Allah! Can't the introductions wait? Or there mightn't

be any! Flee man! Or your children would be orphaned! These frenzied villagers cannot be stemmed by anyone.”



Fig. 18 Representation of large heartedness of Mandodarkhan

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

Hearing this, as he mounted Rozadi and disappeared into the distance, the overlord in order to calm the bewildered villagers, straggled back barefooted towards the village, stating, “The man was rather a tough nut indeed! He not only overwhelmed me, but also snatched my mare and the sword and made away.” On witnessing what had happened and listening to his words, the confusion and anger of the villagers erupted in a cacophony of accusations, questioning his sanity and loyalty, “Oh! Don’t bluff sire! Only if diadem can be lifted off the bow of Sheshnag the reins of a horse can be snatched from Mandodarkhan! Why do you fool us? An only son he was and you helped his killer get away! We shall hound him out of the nether world!” Undeterred, Mandodarkhan defended his decision with a serene face, asserting, “Brothers, are you out of your mind? Did he kill my son intentionally? Do you know how many of his sons, just like my prince are starving at his home? He had come to meet me with high hopes. My son’s death was preordained. It was so willed by Allah, the Almighty. The prince was taken from us because we were not destined to have him. Just because he is no more, should I let a lynching take place on a bright and solemn day like this? Come, let’s prepare for the burial.”

His response with an exceptional display of benevolence, pardon and questioning the intentionality of the act, stands as a testament to his acute understanding of the unintended nature of the incident. The story reaches its culmination as he undertakes the solemn duty of interring his deceased son—an evocative resolution that encapsulates profound motifs of sorrow, forgiveness and the unpredictable facets of destiny, leaving an indelible impression, and fostering reflection on the intricate dimensions of human empathy confronted with profound bereavement. The eloquence of the title “The Killer of his son” lies in its adept distillation of the narrative’s focal point, weaving a thematic tapestry that explores the capricious nature of fate and the profound repercussions of seemingly inconspicuous actions. Fundamentally, the narrative comes together to provide a deep examination of life’s vulnerability, how societies respond to challenges and the extraordinary capability for understanding the sorrows of other human beings even amidst deep grief.

The physical or first space materializes in the rustic expanse of Davaliya village, where the Holi festivities unfold against the ethereal backdrop of the spring month of Fagan. The act of compassion displayed by the squire and the subsequent burial of his son occur within the confines of the royal manor, highlighting the socio-economic and hierarchical dimensions inherent in the village structure. The vibrant portrayal of the village, its manor courtyard, and the ensuing events create a tangible geographical setting that serves as the stage for the unfolding tragedy. The imagined space links the exuberance of the festival with the unforeseen demise of Mandodarkhan’s son, intertwining emotions within the geographical context. The aspects of performance and performativity are evident in the chaotic scenes during the Holi festivities, where the villagers engage in frenzied revelry, chanting and smearing colors. The tragedy that occurs during this celebration, underscores the performativity of the festival and its unintended consequences. To sum up, the narrative strategically utilizes the village of Davaliya as the spatial and cultural milieu to critically analyze the nuanced interplay of characters, events, and broader thematic dimensions, making it a microcosm reflecting the complexities of human relationships and the delicate balance between individual actions and cosmic designs.

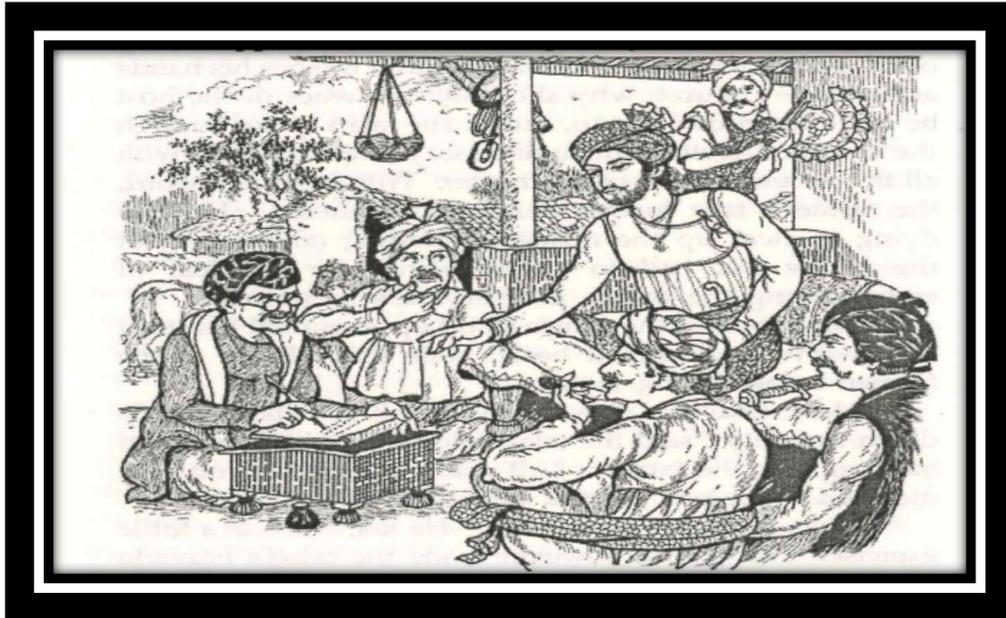


Fig. 19 Appreciation for the hospitality being lavished

Source: *A Noble Heritage*

The narrative “A Bequest” set against the backdrop of the kingdom of Gondal and various villages, skilfully weaves together the themes providing a thoughtful examination of human relationships, societal norms and the unforeseen effects of seemingly mundane choices. In the midst of the mid-summer month of Vaishakh, the hunger-stricken Prince Pathu-bha of Gondal and his cavalry found themselves enroute to Deradi village. Expressing his famishment, the prince, in a moment of vulnerability, decided to break his fast at humble abode of the farmer Patel, setting in motion a chain of events with unintended consequences. The farmer welcomed the prince with open arms, offering genuine hospitality, “Sire, since you’re hungry, why don’t you regard this as a town as good as Gondal Kingdom? After all, this is not wilderness. We all have prospered because of Gondal. Please come to the village. Loaves would be baked in a jiffy, hot and crisp! By the time the sun rises an armlength above the horizon, you’ll be on your way.” Enthralled by the satisfying meal and touched by the farmer’s warm hospitality, the prince experienced a profound sense of pride and contentment, discovering his subject’s affectionate and prosperous way of life. Impelled by this genuine reception, he decided to express his gratitude by bequeathing a patch of land to Patel. He ordered to summon the talati and stated “Now write out a document recording that the prince was hungry and that he dined at Patel’s home today and that in appreciation of the hospitality lavished, the prince bequeaths to Patel a patch of land measuring four farmlengths situated on the

northern flank of Kunkavav town, that Patel would enjoy this privilege without hindrance until the Sun and the Moon shine, that the title should be honoured by all our heirs and descendants of every generation to come and that one dishonouring it would be committing a sin of four parricides.”

Upon hearing this, the farmer’s complexion faded and wilted. Despite his eagerness to rectify the prince’s misconception, he refrained from doing so, fearing it might embarrass the royal guest. In stark contrast, the talati seized every chance to harass him, illustrating themes of societal misjudgement and the repercussions of unbridled authority, stating, “Here, take this, Patel! Dissolve it in milk and gulp down the pulp! All yours, Patel! Do you hear me well? Soak it in milk and gulp it! Dissolve it well before you drink it though! Do you get me? For generations to come, keep dreaming of eating loaves made from the wheat grown from the four farmlengths! Ha...ha.... ha....! The scion gave away the farmland as if he owned it, as if his father, the king of Gondal, had founded Kunkavav town! The boy gave away a tract of land owned by Squire Jaga Wala! Patel, weren’t you ashamed to accept this gift? Indeed, Patel! I know you well! In a return of a pot of cooked rice you had expected a gift of an entire village!” The exasperated farmer who began to lose his patience on hearing these harsh words, tried defending, “Oh scribe! You are raving like a lunatic! Poor lad didn’t know it and made a mistake; so what? And how silly of you to draft a document! Why didn’t you tell him the truth? And what nonsense are you blubbing! No wayfarer, no matter the caste or class, ever passes by our village without being treated with a meal! Knowing that he was a prince of Gondal, how could I have expected anything from him? Don’t you fear God, man?” Even after giving explanations to the talati of his pure intentions by the farmer, the scribe kept muttering words scathing enough to stab his conscious while walking homeward.

When the squire Jaga Wala, the co-owner of Jetpur town, learnt about the mistaken gift of four farmlands, he decided to bring the tale to the court, stating, “Let us also share the fun. Summon the farmer and the talati to the court. Instruct them to bring along the deed.” A messenger was sent to Kunkavav, bearing the squire’s request for the talati to provide an account of the deed’s debacle. Meanwhile, the jubilant scribe who readied himself for the journey anticipating acknowledgment for his vehement reproach of the farmer, the Patel on the other side reluctantly embarked on the path to Jetpur, burdened by apprehensions of the forthcoming scorn.

Arriving at the court in Jetpur, the talati who was smuggling with confidence, regaled the audience with his wordy flourish. He narrated the tale of Patel receiving the gift of four farmlengths with a smirk, emphasizing that the prince of Gondal had given away the land that belonged to the squire. The farmer stood with a bowed head as he further humiliated him, declaring that he must dissolve the deed in a dough and dine on it. At this juncture, quivering with indignation, squire Jagawala intervened reading the document and ordered, “Fetch a copper sheet! Engrave each and every word written on this paper on the copper sheet. Then endorse it that the terms of this deed, originally signed by Prince Pathu-bha of Gondal, shall be binding on us till we enjoy the revenue rights over the gifted land, and that anyone not honouring the terms would be committing a sin of four parricides. And draft a letter to prince Pathu-bha, that he being the son of Sangram-ji is like my own son, that he erred in giving the gift but that had he bequeathed my Kunkavav town, I would have honoured his bequest, that if I did not, I could not have been born of a kathi seed!” This inferential assertion, coupled with the squire’s proclamation about his lineage being rooted in a kathi seed, reinforces the relevance of honor, highlighting the intricate interplay of familial ties and moral obligations.

On hearing the words of the squire, the talati’s face turned pale. In the aftermath of the legal turmoil sparked by the prince’s unintentional bequest, the squire sternly rebuked the scribe and threatened him about severe consequences, vowing to split him vertically if such actions occurred again. Meanwhile, in Gondal, King Sangram-ji and his son Pathu-bha sat parleying after they received the letter from the squire. Realizing the gravity of the situation, the prince acknowledged the error and responded by transferring one-third of the revenue rights enjoyed by the kingdom of Gondal to the squire. While the farmer Patel’s descendants retained rights over the four farmlengths for an extended period, historical records indicate that the bequeathed land was eventually seized during the British Agency’s rule. This resolution underscores the enduring impact of the unintentional bequest on the lives of those involved and the complex interplay of justice displayed in the narrative.

In “A Bequest,” a rich tapestry of themes unfolds, intertwining seamlessly with the narrative. The subsequent events, particularly the scribe Jaga Wala’s actions in the court of Jetpur, unveil the complexities of social hierarchy and rural-urban dynamics. The narrative also delves into the importance of honouring commitments as Jaga Wala

demands the engraving of the terms on a copper sheet, emphasizing the binding nature of the deed. Employing astute legal manoeuvres, he meticulously emphasizes the inexorable nature of the inheritance, when he discovers that the inadvertently conferred gift upon the farmer by the Prince of Gondal intersects within his jurisdiction. The talati's tirade against the farmer brings attention to the detrimental outcomes of misjudgement, while the squire's threat to split the farmer vertically illustrates the dynamics of authority and power. The story subtly explores the theme of legacy as the prince, in realizing his mistake, transfers one third of the revenue rights to the scribe, reflecting a sense of responsibility for his actions. In the narrative, the title finds compelling justification through the multifaceted roles played by its key characters, displaying the far-reaching implications of a bequest that transcends mere material ownership.

The narrative "A Bequest" unfolds across multiple settings, each contributing significantly to the development of the plot and thematic nuances. The primary backdrop is the mid-summer month of Vaishakh, where the initial urgency and agricultural activity of these villages has set the tone for the story defining the lived space. The narrative thrives on the seasonal dynamics and close-knit community interactions, creating a landscape where the characters' lives unfold amidst the challenges of rural existence. The physical space is vividly depicted through Deradi village, situated within the borders of Gondal Kingdom, that becomes a vital setting when the leader of the cavalrymen, fatigued and famished, decides to break his fast there. The village, despite being relatively small and presumably inconspicuous, becomes the epicenter of the narrative as the farmer Patel's life takes an unexpected turn. Kunkavav, the broader kingdom to which Gondal belongs, serves as the overarching political and cultural context for the tale. The mention of the kingdom comprising twelve hundred villages underscores the scale of governance, emphasizing the hierarchical relationships between the prince, Patel, and the squire Jaga Wala.

The physical journey from the agricultural fields to Patel's house marks a transition in settings, as the company of riders follows the farmer up to the gateway of his home. This domestic setting becomes crucial as the unintended bequest itself emerges as an imagined space in the narrative, born out of the prince's experience of hospitality in Deradi that creates an emotional bond, transforming the physical space into a realm of genuine warmth and gratitude. The court of Jetpur, where Jaga Wala learns about the

mistaken gift of land, introduces a new dimension to the story. The contrast between the formality of the court setting and the simplicity of village life reflects Lefebvre's idea of the production of space through social practices. The talati's harassment of Patel and the squire's emphasis on property ownership highlight the societal norms that govern the production of space and property relations. The courtroom becomes a stage where the clash between rural and urban perspectives are contested and negotiated. These varied settings serve as more than mere backdrops by creating a rich tapestry that elevates the narrative beyond a simple tale of generosity, adding depth and complexity to the unfolding events.

In the narrative "The Intrepid," Lord Krishna emerges as an enigmatic and central figure, personifying divine guidance and determined tenacity. His multifaceted character is marked by a magnetic charm, authority and a deep connection with the shepherd cronies. Initially, lord invites them to embark on a journey towards the kingdom of Dwaraka, promising not only material prosperity but also religious fulfilment. The shepherds, however, being enamoured by the scenic allure of Halar, declares, "This is where we'll stay. We will not move an inch from here. If you utter a word against that we'll clobber you blue and black. Only a stupid boor will move out of here." Faced with their reluctance and their eventual choice to settle in Halar, the lord expresses his impatience, warning them of the missed opportunities, "Only a wee bit further, and you'll see what I have in store for you! The height of prosperity is in Sorath, a stone's throw from here! Don't be foolish. Go with me. I'll get you a kingdom of your own." Even after hearing this, their resolve remained unyielding, "We don't want one, not even if you offer us the kingdom of heaven."

Despite their momentary lapse in faith, he pledges them unwavering protection, declaring, "Have it your way you imbeciles! We part company here, but it is my pledge that I shall always protect you until you retain your faith in me. I shall never let you go hungry, and never shall I let you disgrace your sword. I shall always replete your coppery bowls with food and your swords with courage." These commitments showcased Lord Krishna's compassion and a sense of responsibility that transcends earthly concerns. The events in the narrative, from the initial invitation to the shepherds' settlement in Halar, underline his role as a moral compass, emphasizing the thematic core of conviction and the enduring power of divine guidance throughout the unfolding challenges.

The account transitions to the historical siege of Chittal in 1848, where the battlefield was under the control of Ata-bhai, the ruler of Bhavnagar. In a pressing circumstance, he searches for an individual with exceptional strength to neutralize enemy cannons, and Jadav Dangar, a remarkable and staunch Ahir warrior in the narrative, emerges as a courageous and selfless individual, committed to the cause of protecting the Gohil dynasty. His unswerving trust in the divine power of the lord serves as the backdrop of his actions, transforming him into a beacon of bravery. His noteworthy contribution is highlighted by his strong declaration when volunteering for the perilous mission, “An Ahir is never alone; Almighty Krishna is always present on his sword and on his platter.” This proclamation demonstrates not only his fortitude but also an abiding spiritual conviction that underlies his deeds. Mounted on his mare, he charges towards the enemy positions, navigating through billows of smoke and the booming shells. The narrative intensifies as he reaches the cannons, beheading gunners and disabling each of them with sheer valour. His character, therefore, encapsulates the epitome of heroism, effortlessly blending strong faith in lord with audacious actions, showcasing the transformative power of defiance in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. At the narrative’s zenith, Ata-bhai, acknowledging Jadav’s determination, bestows upon him a sincere blessing and a warm embrace, leading his army to conquer the fortress of Chittal.

*Behold them foes, says Kunpada,  
Whipping their harried chargers,  
To scatter and flee wherever they can!*

(Kathis spurred their battleworn horses and fled in all directions.)

The narrative constructs a complex composition of determination and devoutness, elucidating how the interweaving of celestial guidance and human resoluteness not only moulds destinies but also guarantees success in confronting adversities. The shepherd cronies’ initial lure by the magnificent Halar region introduces the theme of materialism versus spiritual pursuits, showcasing the perennial human struggle between worldly desires and higher values depicting imagined space in the narrative. This envisioned space adds a layer of anticipation and aspiration, becoming a contextual backdrop against which the characters’ decisions and conflicts unfold. The title resonates profoundly with the narrative, as the true exemplar of intrepidity surfaces in Jadav Dangar, an Ahir warrior, who fearlessly undertakes mission of ensuring victory for the besieged Gohil dynasty.

The title, thus, encapsulates resilience and indomitable spirit that pervades the characters, offering a profound exploration of heroism in the face of challenges and the enduring protection derived from faith.

In the narrative, the physical space is exemplified by the journey from Sorath to Halar, through a desolate desert tract filled with roasting hot sand, a physical manifestation of the challenges and trials faced by the characters. The Machhu river, coursing through the region, becomes a metaphorical marker, delineating the transition from the allure of material wealth to a profound connection with nature. The later segment of the narrative transports readers to the historical siege of Chittal in 1848, a strategic fortress under attack by Ata-bhai, the king of Bhavnagar. This setting epitomizes the battleground, where cannons and weapons dictate the course of the conflict. The fortress of Chittal, besieged and resistant, becomes a symbol of resilience in the face of external aggression epitomizing lived space, as the characters engage directly with their surroundings. The progression from Sorath to Halar and ultimately to the battlefield of Chittal draws a narrative trajectory that reflects the characters' evolving consciousness and the transformative power of their choices. The carefully crafted settings not only serve as physical backdrops but also function as symbolic landscapes that enrich the narrative with layers of meaning and depth, making the story a profound exploration of credence and persuasion.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

In choosing this literary approach, Meghani sought to go beyond the mere geographical and historical facets of Saurashtra. His narratives became vehicles for preserving and transmitting the intangible cultural heritage of the region. By foregrounding the narratives, songs and poetry of the people, he positioned Saurashtra as distinct from Gujarat, not merely in terms of physical boundaries but, more importantly, in the realm of cultural and lived experiences. This local-centric approach not only set his narratives apart from the broader trends in his writings, but also served as a testament to his dedication for the preservation and dissemination of the unique identity of Saurashtra. His rejection of a purely academic or scientific lens in favor of a more experiential and literary one reinforces the idea that the soul of a place is best captured through its stories, songs and traditions, rather than through detached academic analysis. This unique

approach adds a rich and nuanced layer to the discourse on folk narratives in Gujarati literature.

The folk narratives in *A Noble Heritage* explore the socio-economic disparities, familial expectations and gender roles within the context of Saurashtra, using spaces as metaphors for societal structures and power dynamics. By grounding the narratives in specific geographical locations within the region such as the village chora, the gorge between villages and the regal setting of Sanosara, he creates a sense of place that is integral to the stories being told. The physical spaces such as regal manors, rural settings and ancestral properties serve as more than just backgrounds; they become characters in themselves, reflecting the history and values of Saurashtra. The imagined spaces, like transformative journeys and everyday dreams, intersect with the lived spaces, blurring the lines between reality and aspiration, thereby shaping the characters' identities and experiences. The rejection of patriarchy and the breaking of societal norms by characters like Rupali in "A Garasiya Woman" exemplify how spaces can be transformed to challenge traditional gender roles and redefine cultural identities within the region. Through these examples, Jhaverchand Meghani's narratives in "A Noble Heritage" not only depict Saurashtra as a physical region but also as a cultural landscape where spaces and stories intertwine to create a vivid portrayal of the region's societal dynamics.

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