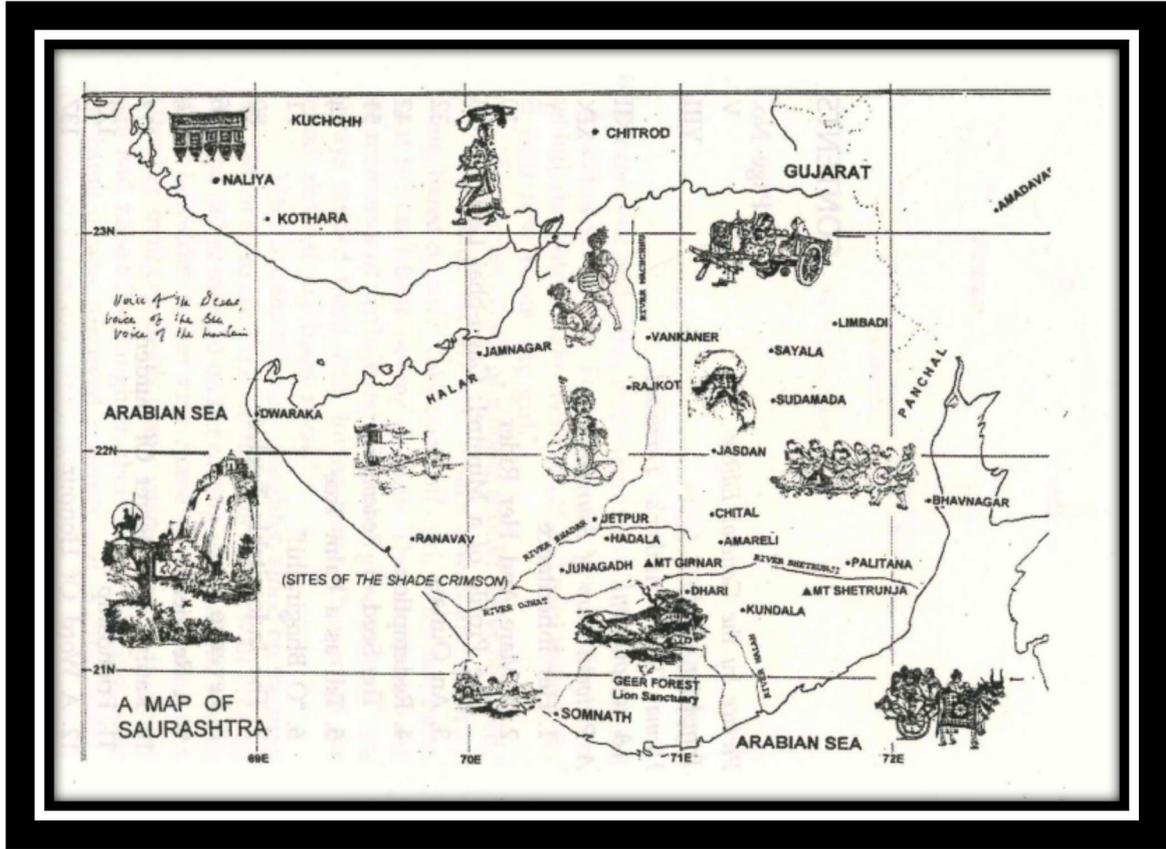


CHAPTER IV
STORIED SPACES
IN
THE SHADE
CRIMSON



This pictorial map captures spatiality in *The Shade Crimson*

Chapter IV

Storied Spaces in *The Shade Crimson*

“Yes, Kathiland, I love you
Right from Bavli to Porbunder,
Under any sort of aspect, any skies,
Though Best loved by the Ocean
Where the league-long rollers thunder
And the blow-whale’s fitful fountains dimly rise.
I shall love you hereafter,
Through the years that are to follow,
And wherso’ver my station be assigned;
Where the May mists hide the hilltops
Or the June sun grips the hollow,
Where the Indus roars at flood time,
Or the thatched caves house the swallow—
Yet my heart within your borders you will find”

- F. W. Kinciad

4.1 Introduction

Jhaverchand Meghani’s deliberate effort to highlight Saurashtra’s distinctiveness from Gujarat manifests in a multi-dimensional approach, grounded in cultural, linguistic and historical considerations. Firstly, he strategically places Saurashtra’s fluid oral traditions and folklore at the forefront of his articulation of the region’s culture. By

elevating these oral traditions to a status equal to formal written literary works, he challenges the prevailing notion that often overlooks the significance of folk narratives. This choice not only underscores the richness of Saurashtra's cultural heritage but also positions it as a dynamic and integral part of the region's identity. Despite Saurashtra's geographical inclusion in the emerging Greater Gujarat, he strives to preserve its individuality amidst the complexities of monolingual regionalism and the burgeoning multilingual landscape of the nation. This reflects a delicate balance between regional identity and a broader evolving national consciousness.

The Shade Crimson, 'Oral Traditions of Saurashtra: II' is the second part of the trilogy of three works of folk narratives translated from *Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar*. It is a continuous sequel of different folk narratives based on the book *A Noble Heritage*. This chapter delves into the inquiry in the extent to which Meghani's narratives not only mirror the society but also actively participate in the formation of spatial dimensions. Every narrative unfolds with its distinctive allure, revealing the richness and depth of Saurashtra's cultural fabric. The twelve stories namely *Her Inheritance*, *A Mare and Her Rider*, *An Outlaw*, *Redemption*, *Tall as a Palm Tree*, *Revenge*, *A Requim*, *Kaniya*, *The Bearer of Burden*, *friendship*, and *The Word of Honour* in *The Shade Crimson* 'Oral Traditions of Saurashtra: II' embodies the fundamental elements of Saurashtrian narrative customs, ranging from age-old myths transmitted across successive generations through the accounts of valour, romance, and otherworldly experiences. The chapter provides a thorough examination of the complex correlation between the dynamics of space as a valuable analytical instrument for deconstructing these conventional narratives. The chapter presents a reconstruction of Saurashtra as a distinct "space" which is characterised by its unique qualities and features.

4.2 Analysis

The narrative "Her Inheritance" unfolds in the quaint village of Champarada near Junagadh, highlighting the complex web of family ties and societal norms. Heer-bai, the central protagonist of this narrative, epitomizes a harmonious blend of grace, filial duty and a fierce resolve to navigate her own path amidst the treacherous web of traditional customs. Cloaked in the elegance of an eighteen-year-old belle, she stands as the quintessence of beauty, draped in bridal attire on the momentous occasion of her wedding, adorned with opulent gold and silver ornaments that indicates substantial material wealth

comprising her dowry. The loss of her mother in bygone years propels her into the role of a devoted caregiver for her father as he grows older, sculpting her character with an acute sense of moral obligations.

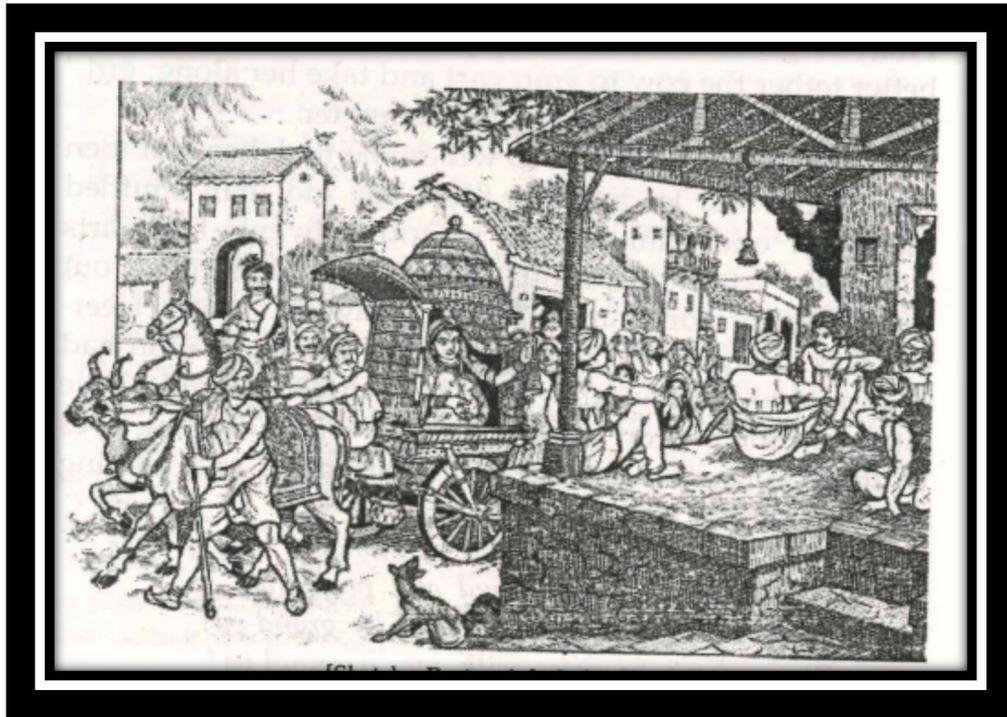


Fig. 20 Heer-bai embarking to her marital abode

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The aged father of Heer-bai in this narrative stands as a compelling figure, embodying the weight of time and ancestral genealogy with his tottering and elderly physical presence, serving as a witness to the passage of sixty years. Deeply engrossed in the rustic estate, he emerges as a character defined by a quiet and subdued nature, weathered by the storms of life. Despite frailty, he plays an essential role, urging his daughter to carry all the material possessions as her dowry, which sets off a series of events that reiterate his vital position in the unfolding of the narrative. Heer-bai, torn between traditions and personal agency, embarks on her journey with a lavish dowry, emblematising the tangible richness of her heritage. The loading of dowry carts represents a performative act, symbolising a ritualistic portrayal of societal norms and expectations in the narrative.

Heer-bai, seated in a canopied wagon, led a procession of twenty-five carts as she departed from the manor to her marital home. The coaches filled with the collection of pots, pans, tapestries and the symbolic tiger claws signified a heritage not only of materialistic wealth but of memories and the enduring essence of a cherished home. The villagers, captivated by her comeliness, gathered to bid her farewell. She being seated in the wagon, gazed dreamily at her handsome husband riding a mare at a trotting pace alongside the file.

In the courtyard of grand-pa stands a mango tree.

A tree-trunk portly, proud and profound;

Plucked I've only a single leaf, o grand-pa!

Please don't be cross with me, o grand-pa!

A sparrow of the wild and green I am, o grand-pa.

Soon I shall flit away and soar afar;

Today I'm in the homeland of the grand-pa;

Morrow I'll be perched on another cliff.

As she envisioned a joyful future with her husband, her concern for her father, who was about to enter his second childhood, clouded her blissful thoughts. Contemplating who would care for him and bake soft loaves soaked in ghee; her aspirations faced the reality of leaving her father behind. As the procession neared the chora, she raised the curtain to greet her uncle and cousins from a distance, conveying her silent request for their care of her father.

The narrative takes a compelling turn at the chora, where familial discord erupts as her cousins challenge the opulence of the dowry. Heer-bai being resilient and determined, retraced her steps, stating “Enough father. That’s enough. Come, let’s go back into the manor. Coachmen, brothers mine, please turn around all the carts. Today is not an auspicious day.” Her personality marked by her testament to perseverance, she bravely retraces her steps to the manor when confronted by opposition from her cousins, liberating herself from marital constraints and fortifying the theme of feminine

empowerment. Additionally, she transforms her aging father into a suitable candidate for marriage by relentlessly pursuing her fantasy of rejuvenating him. The birth of her baby brothers adds another layer to her character, reflecting her dedication to nurture family connections. The culmination of her astounding journey reaches its pinnacle as she successfully delivers the entire dowry to her new home, showcasing a harmonious fusion of indomitable strength and individual determinism. The narrative skilfully explores various thematic dimensions, with a central focus on the enduring legacy of the family that forms its nucleus. Together, these embedded thematic strands unravel a tapestry rich in exploration, contemplating tradition and a sense of accountability in shaping familial destinies.

The narrative presents a multilayered exploration of spaces that extend beyond mere physical backdrops, becoming integral components that shape the characters and thematic underpinnings of the story. The physical space is depicted through various geographical locations present in the narrative. The tale unfolds within a rural milieu, predominantly centered around the manor, a symbolic locus of cultural heritage and traditions. Its interior becomes a canvas where familial tensions and inner struggles are laid bare, particularly during the loading of carts with the dowry, each item carrying memories that bridge the past to the present. The courtyard of the manor emerges as a transitional space, symbolizing the threshold between Heer-bai's familial roots and her impending marital journey. The chora, representing the village outskirts, becomes a central stage for the discord, underlining the intersection of private and communal spheres.

Her scrupulous disassembly of cherished possessions within the manor depicts imagined space in the narrative, laden with intense emotional resonance, connecting her to recollections associated with her deceased mother. The dissonance within the chora brings forth the interaction between evolving societal dynamics and individual empowerment, as she prompts her resilient return to the manor, embodying women's autonomy. Her return from one space to the other showcases the resistance against power depicting thirdspace in the narrative. Lefebvre's concept of space in everyday life is intricately narrated throughout the story, reflecting various emotions and spheres of life. The barn, where she tends to the cattle, represents the lived space, mirroring a sense of stewardship and diligence. Analytically, the settings in the narrative surpass being mere

backdrops, playing vital roles in becoming active forces that impact its direction while offering insightful glimpses into their psychology.

According to the pen portrait compiled by the author, this event had occurred at a village named Champarada near Junagadh. The old man at the center of the story was referred to by some as Waghe Wala, while others asserted that he was Uga Wala, both esteemed members of the Kathi community. Perusing the recorded notes, it becomes evident that an intriguing offshoot of the event exists, one that the author has refrained from incorporating into the narrative. The two sons of the aged Kathi man, Sura and Matra, discovered as they grew up, that a farmer in Vadala village had named his two bullocks exactly after them. After hearing this, they decided to go and kill the farmer for his audacity. Upon sneaking into the farmer's barn, they observed a well-stocked inventory of oilcakes and cottonseeds. To their surprise, the farmer not only fed both bullocks generously but also showered them with constant affection. Choosing benevolence over hostility, they decided to gift their thoroughbred mares to the farmer before peacefully returning to their village. It is worth noting that some attribute this event to an Ahir family, adding a layer of complexity to the narrative.

The narrative "A Mare and Her Rider" embarks on a perilous river crossing at Shetrunji, accentuating the willpower required to navigate life's challenges. Squire Sootha Wala, a denizen of the quaint Itariya village, emerges as the linchpin of the narrative, epitomizing an indomitable spirit and relentless resolve. Clad in the traditional attire that mirrors his rustic roots, he personifies the quintessential gallant rider, echoing the ethos of his rural upbringing. Anchored in a conservative milieu, his conduct is deeply entrenched in the tangled drapery of conventional standards and family obligations. Confronted with the formidable task of crossing a deadly river, he exhibits not only remarkable courage but an adamant stubbornness, impervious to the entreaties for patience. His character is imbued with an overwhelming sense of dedication to the sacred ties that bind a family. Beyond his valiant exterior, his journey unfolds as a substantial exploration of human resilience, their complicated behavioural patterns and the unflinching quest for familial reunification.



Fig. 21 Squire Sootha Wala

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The narrative further delves into the tribulations faced by his family in the midst of catastrophe while crossing the river. His wife, emerges as a devoted character, navigating through the hurdles with staunch bravery and maternal strength. Hailing from Menkada village, she embraces traditional norms within the cultural backdrop. Embellished with a flame-coloured sash and a green design depicting the faces of gopis and the flute's player on each arm, she bears a four-month separation from Sootha with stoic optimism. Encountering pregnancy, she journeys to her parental abode for confinement, enduring the requisite two-months period following the birth of a healthy baby boy. The crescent moon of the rainy month of Ashaadh signifies a reunion with her husband, marking her return voyage to her in-laws house, fraught with both natural and disruptive turbulences.

Moreover, the story explores the complex interplay of traditions and societal conventions, as Sootha bound by a vow, resists returning to his in-laws house, potentially risking the life of all of them. Significantly, his wife exemplifies unshaken loyalty, jeopardizing her life and that of her cherished child by faithfully following her husband's lead. Squatting on a pontoon with her two-month-old infant in her arms, she maintains

her composure even when attacked by a rattlesnake that unexpectedly lands on the drowning dock. Despite this threat, she continues to protect her child, veiling her face and murmuring a litany to Mother Goddess. The harrowing ordeal conveys her perpetual nature, showcasing a great ability to withstand troubles even in the face of mortal danger. Her silent toughness contributes to the depths of sacrificial nature of motherhood in the narrative.

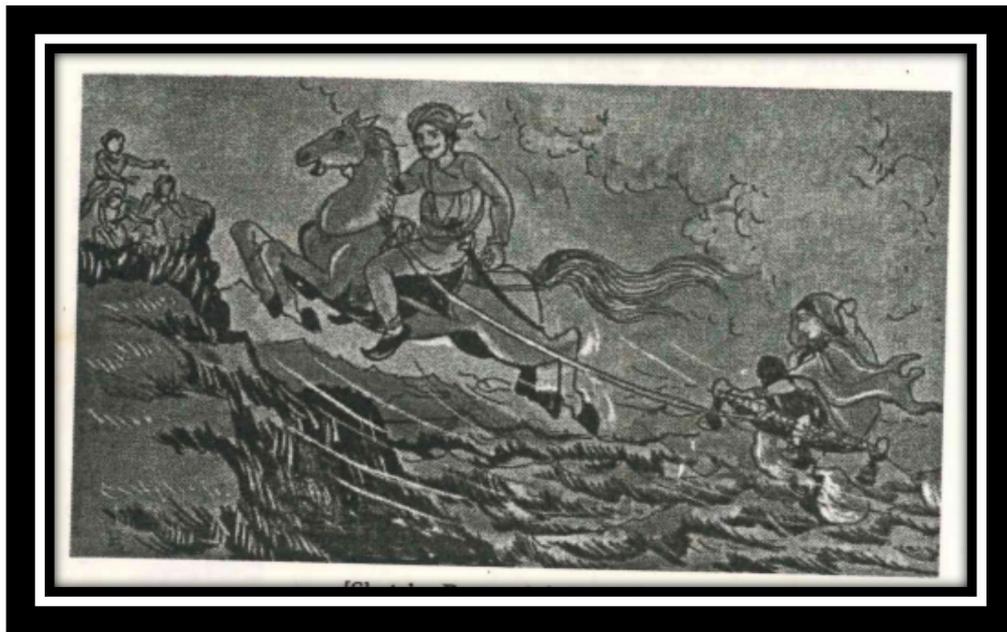


Fig. 22 Squire Sootha Wala and his family juggling through the treacherous terrains with his mare Manaaki

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

Squire's resolute determination and his mare's unwavering loyalty are tested, as they navigate through treacherous terrains and face unexpected hurdles. Maanaki, the iconic mare, portrays fidelity and solidarity, resembling the traits of a central character in the narrative. As a representative of the proud Kathiyawad breed, she is adorned with a saddle and bridle of exceptional quality, illustrating the dignity of her lineage. Swift and spirited, she becomes a paragon of robustness and adaptability, responding to events with insatiable restlessness and enthusiasm that characterize a faithful companion. Negotiating a steep bluff, she reveals a harmonious coordination of muscular strength, reflexes and an intuitive understanding with Squire Sootha. Her captivating leaps and bounds, propelled by a powerful upward thrust, addresses not only her physical prowess but also the close

association shared with her rider. These vigilant and dramatic traits, elevate her into a symbol of loyalty and a tenacious accomplice, capable of executing daring feats in the face of odds by showcasing the stature of her bloodline.

The tragic loss of Maanaki becomes a poignant climax, echoing themes of courage, tradition and the intricate interplay between human and animal, underscoring the profound consequences of steadfast perseverance and familial bonds in the face of hardship. The use of the term 'Mare' in the narrative represents not just the horse's physical presence but also her unequivocal agility, allegiance and sacrifice. The mare emerges as a prominent figure, exhibiting attributes that go beyond mere equestrian prowess, becoming an emblem of energy and devotion. The duha in the narrative embodies orality with its rhythmic verses, vivid imagery, and conversational tone, highlighting the interdependence of the rider and his mare, illustrating their shared destiny, gallantry and the selfless act performed by Maanaki during dire circumstances.

On the rain-soaked earth, swift thud the hooves

Of a galloping thoroughbred horse;

The rider dashing to his flame, her eyes cervine,

Or to sweep the sword, in a melee of the brave.

(A girl asked another where the dashing rider could be heading his highbred horse on a rain-soaked slushy path in the thick of a dark night. Her friend answered that the gallant rider was either speeding to meet his beloved with eyes shapely as those of a doe, or rushing to plunge into a battle of swords, either on a path of amour or on a road of valour, nowhere else.)

A steed of breed, a virile man 'n a woman of virtue,

Three are the mortal gems, created by the Providence

(God created three priceless creatures in the universe: a swift horse, a fearless warrior and a worthy and virtuous woman mate. However, rare is a concurrence of the three; it occurs only by God's will.)

Elegant horse in rein, curls sweeping his face,

Fully armoured, his weapons all shiny and sleek;

Raring he is, to charge into the enemy hordes,

die he'd only once, the brave one knows.

(Riding a quality horse, endowed with youthful zest and reality, protected by armour and equipped with razor-sharp weapons, one would be raring to plunge, even single handedly, into a battle against a large horde of enemy horsemen, because one knows that the death comes only once in a lifetime and equally rare is a chance to meet a glorious end.)

The intricately unfolds against the rural landscapes of Methali, Itariya and Krankach, with Squire Sootha Dhadhal and his steadfast mare, Maanaki, at its heart vividly portraying the physical spaces throughout the narrative. Initially, Methali village serves as a communal backdrop where the locals engage in discussions about renowned horse breeds, such as Maanaki, Taajan, Beri, Foolmaal, Resham and Vaandarya. This conversational milieu sets the stage for the subsequent events and exemplifies the lived space and oral tradition inherent in storytelling. The vivid descriptions of the rainy and dark night, with slushy paths, evoke a tangible atmosphere that enhances the narrative's thematic contrasts. The subsequent shift to Itariya village of the Sorath region marks a significant juncture where Squire Sootha resides. This village serves as the starting point for his arduous journey to Menkada, the town of his in-laws where he goes to retrieve his wife and his newborn child. The central and climactic setting materializes along the banks of the Shetrunji river, aptly named Shetal. This locale becomes the crucible where the narrative tension reaches its zenith during the river crossing. The evocative description of the river's spate, the cascading water columns and the atmospheric conditions enhances the sense of urgency and peril. The pontoon, a makeshift vessel comprising four dried melons tied to a stool, adds an improvised yet precarious element to the setting, emphasizing the characters' resourcefulness in the face of adversity.

As the story unfolds, the village named Krankach stands out as a strategic point in his journey, highlighting the geographical landscape and the challenges posed by the

torrential rain. The dramatic tension escalates as he endeavors a bold leap on his mare, with the steep cliffs and riverbank evolving into critical factors determining life and death. The imagined space culminates with a tragic turn of events when Maanaki, the titular mare, succumbs to hazards of the river crossing. The emotional intensity is heightened as Sootha mourns the loss of his loyal companion. The setting, characterized by the river's tumultuous flow, treacherous cliffs and relentless rain, adds a heartbreaking touch to the tragic separation of the rider and his horse, transforming it from a mere geographical location into a space intertwined with the characters' feelings, fears and struggles.

As depicted by the author Jhaverchand Meghani, the biographical account of Gagubhai Leela, a minstrel pivotal in shaping the narrative of "A Mare and Her Rider," unveils a vivid portrayal of his life and contributions in capturing the essence of Kathi culture, folklore and the oral traditions, showcasing a unique blend of lyrical symbols and vivid imagery. Originating from the lineage of Charan poets in Sanali village, Gagubhai possessed a distinct storytelling style characterized by a thick voice and a resolute adherence to the Kathi courts, stating how he had once envisioned a lion: *Gray mane with an armlength of dusting sweep, each paw big as a large salver, the trunk measuring eleven and half armlengths, head mammoth as an earthen water cask, chest massive as the shield of a rhino, waist slim enough to be contained between four fingers; when the brute came leaping with his one and half armlength of tail up and his profuse crown pointing skyward, the roar rumbling out of his lungs, sounding as though buttermilk of twenty buffaloes was being churned by a giant churner, could be heard as far as two kilometres away. The impact of his hurtling mass triggered rocks weighing as much as a kilogram each shake loose from the quaking earth, and sent them thudding and bounding well ahead of him at a breakneck speed. And when he pounded the earth, dust storms rose and filled the sky. Ghe...Ghe...Ghe... He pounced; one leap, a second leap, and with the third one when he struck, the prey turned into a pulp!*

The author's prolonged interactions with him, spanning seven years within the opulent environs of Hadala state, cultivated a close friendship. His storytelling, characterized by a judicious infusion of humor, greatly enhanced the author's comprehension of Kathi culture. His characterizations that depicted outlaws and historical events were exceptionally vivid, exemplifying a storyteller highly sensitive to the subtleties of his narratives. The act of encouraging his son to document the songs sung by

women in the rural areas on various occasions, reinforces his dedication to the cultural legacy of the Kathiawars and his critical role in preserving and disseminating folk literature. This narrative also points out his instrumental role in circulating accounts like the touching love story of Sheni-Vijaanand and the gripping narrative of “A Mare and Her Rider.” His demise in 1941 marked the closure of a significant chapter, leaving an indelible impression on the author. Despite his physical absence, the author continued to revisit these stories with an immense respect of gratitude and nostalgia, acknowledging his lasting impact on the perpetuation and diffusion of Kathi lifestyle and tradition through the storytelling.

In the narrative “An Outlaw,” the central motif revolves around the forthcoming environmental risks, specifically the ensuing hazards of lightning, metaphorically resembling the arbitrary essence of destiny. The Brahmin astrologer, placed in a difficult situation, grapples with dangerous task of predicting the king’s fate, exhibiting the innate fragility of human existence in the face of celestial forces, as he forewarns the king about the potential danger of being struck by a thunderbolt. The king, despite his regal stature, leaving his palace and seeking shelter under the lofty mountain ranges after listening to the prophecy, throws light on the dimensions of fear, vulnerability and existential reflection, prompting him to contemplate his mortality and engage with the uncertainties of future.

The king’s realization of the ephemeral nature of human alliances and connections, as he remarks, “What a world! An illusion indeed!” portrays the facets of capriciousness and betrayal in the narrative, as his once loyal warriors desert him, leaving him alone in the cave as the time of prognosis draws closer. The interaction with outlaws, Kalyan and Umeda, introduces the theme of justice as they confront the king, transcending societal norms for familial retribution. The character named Kalyan-sang, personifies the spirit of a renegade, not merely in the conventional sense of a rebellion, but in the deeper, cosmic context of defying fate. The subsequent relocation of Kalyansang within Mount Jodhpariya to save the king named Kalyanmal, becomes a critical juncture, unveiling the essence of sacrifice embodied by an enigmatic outlaw, who willingly endured the cosmic tragedy destined for the king. The narrative delves into the contrasting issues between societal roles and familial bonds, emphasizing the king’s realization of the sufferings he unknowingly inflicted upon his cousin brothers Kalyan and Umeda. The title enfolds the

interplay of familial ties, offering an introspective contemplation on all the aspects of human journey. The in-depth examination of these thematic elements, comprehensively connected to the characters and their dilemmas, forms the narrative's scholastic core.



Fig. 23 Kalyan and Umeda approaching Mount Jodhpariyo

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

In this narrative, the first space, representing physical or real space, is initially established with a Brahmin astrologer from Amareli town in Kathiyawad visiting the royal court of King Kalyanmal of Idar. Within this courtly setting, the astrologer delivers the predictive revelation regarding his potential demise by a thunderbolt. The thirdspace becomes evident as the transitioning shift in the setting occurs within the protective hollow of Mount Jodhpariya, where a strategically chosen cave becomes the sanctuary against the foretold calamity. The king, accompanied by his retinue, confronts the dangerous threat by seeking shelter under this mountain, marking the climax of the narrative, as it stands as a metaphor for reciprocation between the external tempest and the sheltered grotto that raises the thematic tension between natural forces and human agency. The outskirts of the Idar town emerge as observant peripheries, providing a panoramic view for the external locals to witness the traction that escalates within the

cave, anticipating the advancing disaster and helplessness faced by the onlookers, connecting the real and imagined elements. The astrologer's prophecy, the king seeking shelter and the outlaws confronting him are performative acts that intricately shape the spatial and emotional dimensions of the story. These actions transcend mere physical events, weaving a rich tapestry of apprehension, fragility, and ethical decisions, blurring the lines between concrete experience and conceptual realms within the narrative.



Fig. 24 Roopi engaged with Nathu in their affectionate prattles while redecorating her house

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The overarching narrative of “Redemption” reverberates deeply within the story, capturing Roopi’s personal odyssey and the drastic shift that she undergoes. Her persistent dedication to reshape her modest home, conveys a powerful liberation from societal expectations that may restrict women to traditional roles. Her arduous efforts to

carve niches, paint frescoes and beautify her surroundings reflect a desire for individual and domestic redemption, seeking a higher purpose beyond the mundane. The obstacles she faces, including the risky nature of her work and the gossip from envious neighbours, draw attention to the compromises made on the journey towards restoration. The multifaceted themes in the narrative are blended seamlessly with the challenging dynamics of Roopi and Nathu's relationship. The initial description showcases the variables of mutual love and companionship as the couple participate in affectionate prattles amid their daily struggles, signifying an intimate connection. The erroneous impressions created by neighbours, portraying her as an overworking and laborious daughter-in-law, shape the misguided beliefs of her parents, fostering a milieu of misjudgements concerning her in-laws.

The tragic turn of events addresses the theme of unfulfilled love, as Nathu's absence at the festive occasion leaves her devastated. The narrative delves into the implications of discrepancies and its consequences, as her parents, influenced by false rumors, arranges her second marriage with a man from a well-to-do family. In the thoroughbred of her vehement opposition fuelled by her sincere love for her husband, the narrative culminates in a heart wrenching event at the river embankment, as her attempts to console her parents by making them realise the truth and her desperate pleas to Nathu goes unanswered. The narrative reaches its climax with Roopi's heartfelt conviction and devastating fate, outlining the overarching subject matter of sacrifice and loss. In this thought-provoking turn of events, the title not only captures her initial quest for self-improvement but also bears the burden of her ultimate tragedy, questioning obsolete conceptions of redemption and displaying the delicacies of the societal influences that shape her destiny.

The narrative of "Redemption" weaves a complex tapestry of spatial elements, each playing a distinct role in Roopi's transformative journey. The faraway ravines, situated off the town of Bapodar, embody the physical or real space, serving as the prominent stage for her relentless efforts to elevate her humble abode. Bapodar itself serves as a manifestation of social conventions, representing the lived space where she confronts and seeks to overcome constraints and restrictions through her ambitious endeavors within her in-laws' house. The well on the outskirts symbolizes imagined space, laden with communal scrutiny and accusations related to her ambitious projects. The

story emphasizes her longing to visit her parents during auspicious days, leading to a series of events that impacts her life in a significant way. The river embankment emerges as a prominent site, where the desperate pleas for her absolution unfolds. These meticulously crafted dimensions amalgamating real and imagined spaces, adds layers of meaning to the story, as each location becomes a metaphorical stage for her struggles, aspirations and ultimate tragedy.

The author's note about the source of the story, "The Seed of *Redemption*" offer a nuanced glimpse into a significant span of his life- from early childhood around the age of six or seven to the youthful years of twenty-eight or thirty. Invited by a literary circle in Godhara, he recalls disembarking at dusk, greeted by a host who, contrary to expectations, led them to the residence of the Deputy Superintendent. An initial apprehension gave way to a pleasant surprise as the dwelling turned out to be that of the author's kinsfolk, including Tripurashankar Bhatt, a former police officer, along with his wife Mani-ba and their son Balu-bhai. He notes down in his account how the unexpected reunion evoked childhood memories in his mind, particularly of Kumud-ben, Tripurashankar's widowed sister. This narrative signifies the depiction of how the author, prompted by Kumud-ben's vivid narration, created the character of Nathu's wife, Roopi, in a well-regarded story.

Kumud-ben, a central figure in the narrative, emerges as a character of profound significance. Described as young, beautiful, soft-spoken and deeply perceptive, she is introduced as the widowed sister of Tripurashankar Bhatt, a police foudjar. Her journey through life is marked by the challenges of widowhood, having lost her husband when the author was merely seven years old. Despite these hardships, Kumud-ben is portrayed as dignified, affectionate, sparkling, sweet-spoken, pleasant and serene. The narrative hints at her resilience, as she navigates the complexities of her circumstances, living with her parents through different stages of their lives, including when her father becomes a police superintendent. Her enduring presence in the author's life is noted, spanning decades and leaving a lasting impact on his memory. Kumud-ben's storytelling skills play a crucial role in the narrative, as she recounts the tale of Nathu's wife, contributing to the shaping of the story that the author regards as one of his notable creations. The jottings from a page in his journal about the events that lead to the creation of the story are listed below:

Mers' Bapodar town.

Father Kacharo Mer. Son Nathu and his comely virtuous wife.

Wife very competent at renewing the plastering of the floors and the walls.

Jealous neighbors went up to her parents and gossiped: Your daughter is overworked.

Festive month Shravan. Wife going to parents' home for a few days.

Said to mother-in-law: "Please do send Nathu to my parents' home for the festive seventh-eighth, or my holidays'd be ruined."

To father-in-law too....

After she went to the parents, they stopped her from returning to Nathu, summoned Nathu's father and made him sign the annulment deed.

...We'll marry you elsewhere... Daughter said: I wouldn't remarry. Went to the river to wash clothes and drowned herself.

The narrative "Tall as a Palm Tree" resonates through the embodiment of Bheem Garaniya's towering courage, resilience and unwavering commitment to justice. Bheem, an Ahir from Akala village, emerges as a symbol of indomitable strength, akin to the towering stature of a palm tree. His actions, from negotiating with Pratapsang to confronting Shamalo, underline his role as a protector of justice and a beacon of strength for the community. The title resonates with the thematic essence of the story, capturing the heroic spirit of Bheem Garaniya, whose stature transcends the physical, symbolizing resilience, courage and the triumph of righteousness. Lord Krishna's historical patronage of the Ahir community sets the backdrop for the tale. The story unfolds in the town of Satpada, within the kingdom of Bhavnagar, where a conflict arises due to Pratapsang's intention to establish a new village on the border, causing distress to the residents of the city. The town administrators grapple with dilemma of persuading him to alter the location, fearing inevitable disputes between neighbouring hamlets.

In the midst of this, the narrative unfolds with a 'story within a story' about two villages, Manekwada and Megharwada, resolving a boundary dispute with the help of a snake, serving as a precedent for the king's reference. Returning to the main plot, the constables, disheartened by the king's rejection, report their failure to the head clerk,

contemplating their next move. A mysterious stranger, Bheem Garaniya, known for his earthy demeanor, intervenes, offering to negotiate with Pratapsang. His reputation precedes him, having stood against Siddharaj Jaisinh during the construction of Malav Lake.

The story takes a turn when Shamalo, the king's brother-in-law, attempts to avenge the perceived humiliation by raiding Satpada and stealing their cattle. Unaware of the scale of the threat, Bheem returns to the village to find chaos. In a moment of urgency, his wife rallies the villagers, emphasizing the potential disgrace they face if they don't stand up against the invaders. He being, characterized by unassuming nature, leads the charge with them, displaying unity and courage. In a dramatic confrontation, he single-handedly faces Shamalo and his three hundred raiders, thwarting their attempt to steal the cattle. The symbolic significance of being "tall as a palm tree" becomes evident as he emerges victorious, embodying not only physical prowess but moral strength. His actions prompt the administration in Bhavnagar to acknowledge heroism. The king being impressed, rewards with him with land, a mare and provisions. The narrative concludes with his return to his native town, escorted by the state cavalry, receiving adulation from the villages enroute.

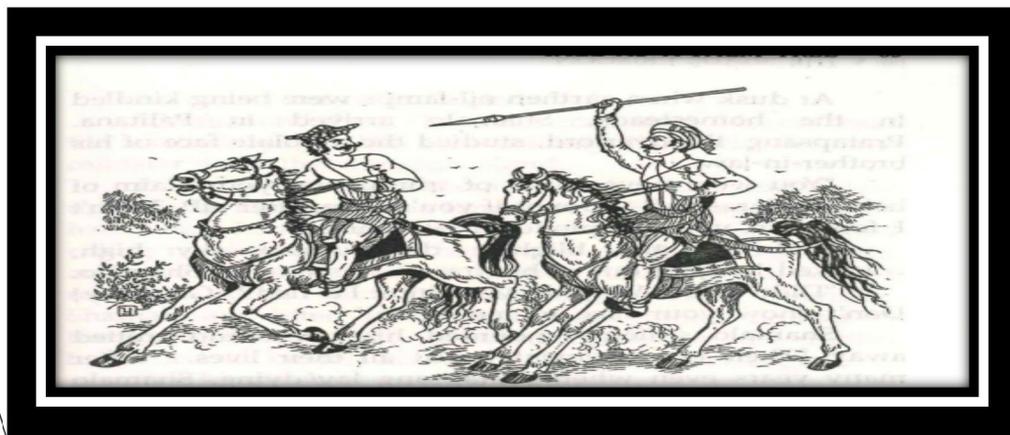


Fig. 25 Bheem single handedly encountering Shamalo

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The physical space is exemplified as the narrative unfolds in the rustic village of Satpada, where the protagonist, initially introduced as Bheem Garaniya, resides. Satpada, nestled amidst idyllic surroundings, becomes the focal point of the tale, setting the stage

for the subsequent events. As the plot progresses, the narrative transitions to the regal backdrop of Bhavnagar, the administrative center and a pivotal location where the consequences of Bheem's actions reverberate. Here, the clash between justice and authority takes center stage, highlighting the societal dynamics at play. The pivotal confrontation between Bheem and Shamalo unfolds in the expansive landscape surrounding Satpada. This confrontation, laden with symbolic significance, symbolizes the clash between moral fortitude and the forces of opportunistic aggression. The idyllic surroundings of Satpada evoke a sense of nostalgia for Bheem, representing imagined space subtly woven into the narrative, imbued with personal history and cultural resonance. The village of Satpada transforms into a thirdspace as it becomes not just a physical location but a symbol of communal strength and the battle for justice. The village, infused with the emotions and collective resilience of its inhabitants, transcends its tangible boundaries to become a space where real and imagined elements converge. The clash between justice and authority in Bhavnagar illustrates the intersection of political and lived spaces, where societal norms dictate the course of events.

The narrative "O Bhagirathi" unfolds predominantly within the confines of Junagadh town, with Nagajan Gadhavi, the son of charan woman named Nag-bai, manoeuvring Rajde Gadhavi, his fellow charan, into a convoluted situation navigated by the king. Serving as a minstrel in the court, he emerges as a devious and scheming character in the narrative, believed to have cursed and precipitated the ruin and demise of Ra' Mandalik, the erstwhile king of Junagadh. His character, driven by vengeance and a desire for supremacy, not only serves his personal vendetta but also highlights the religious tensions within the town. His ill intentions are subtly revealed through his interactions giving rise to the tension between Hindu and Islamic rituals, which could be observed in his sardonic remark, "I do, your imperial majesty! And the babes would nudge away the breasts of their mothers and gape, all agog, master mine! There still exist men who can make the meandering water stand still by their ardour while sounding the call of the Divine. Our Rajde-bhai here is one, to begin with."

In the court, as he orchestrates in tormenting him for demonstrating a divine prowess incompatible with his faith, Rajde, staunch in his Hindu beliefs, passionately pleads against compromising with his religion, "Provider of my loaf, please don't! I am a charan, purest among the Hindus, the bearer of a janoi, a descendent of the Goddess of

the universe. I couldn't have indulged in such a practice not only during my present life but through all my past lives as a human being!" However, the emperor prevailed by Nagajan's crafty act, ordered by displaying his authority, "Rajde Gadhavi, you'll have to sound the aazaan. You must give us a glimpse of your accomplishment."

This formidable task required him, against the grain of his deeply rooted fundamentalist views, to sound the Islamic call of prayer from the minaret. The narrative unfolds as he scuffles with the moral and spiritual consequences of this seemingly impossible demand. In the subsequent sequences, he being torn between his faith and the command of the highness, climbs back three steps towards the minaret, joins his palms and embarks on singing duha verses in a voice full of anguish and entreaty by engaging in fervent prayers, calling upon the divine forces and specifically invoking the holy river Bhagirathi in moments of desperation. This expiatory act symbolizing Hinduism within the Islamic setting delves into the complex structures of religious coexistence and the enlightening influence of conviction that surpasses sectarian boundaries.

Rust formed on a body,

Cannot be scaled away;

Purified one can be,

Only by your embrace, o Bhagirathi!

(O Bhagirathi, where can I go now? A rusty metal can be abraded, but the sins of a mortal body cannot be removed even with a chipping hammer. O Mother, a body can achieve salvation only if you take it in your arms. Please come and cleanse this debased carriage of mine.)

He who will not bow and drink,

Ganga water in gulps,

'd ramble in the mortal world,

As a wailing ghost, o Bhagirathi!

(O Ganga, anyone who has not bowed before you and quenched his thirst by a deep drink of your water is ill-fated to rave and ramble eternally like a spectre in the mortal world. But you are too far from me. How can I reach you? These are my final moments.)

Crippled who straggle to you

'n drink from your brimming stream;

Fortunes smile on them,

Who're thus graced by you, o Bhagirathi!

(O Mother, fortunes smile not only on the healthy ones but also on the lepers and the disabled that manage to totter to your bank and wet their lips with your water. O Mother, why am I, an innocent one, so ill-fated that I am unable to reach you?)

He who keeps both the eyes open,

While dipping in your stream,

Goes to heaven, 'n so do his heirs,

By your blessings, o Varanasi!

(O sacred river Varanasi, it is believed that if a person takes a dip in your stream and keeps eyes open while underwater, not only he but his every descendent too is assured of a berth in the kingdom of heaven.)

While straggling toward you,

The soles of the feet that turn sore

're fanned, tenderly stroked 'n soothed,

By angels divine, o Jahnavi!

(O Mother, o incarnation of Seeta, it is believed that while straggling on the long journey toward you, if one's feet are singed and bruised, the nymphs of the Golden City massage them and fan them with cool air. But what solace do you offer to me? How can I take even a step toward you? Answer me, o Mother, hail back if you hark!)

Cleansed 're the sins of pilgrims;

Even those who beheld the pilgrims,

'n drank a drop of the sacred water,

Entered the paradise, o Bhagirathi!

(O Mother, a powerful cleanser of the sins you are. You are so pure and sacred that you sanctify not only the pilgrims who reach your stream, but also those who manage to catch a glimpse of, and avail of a sip of, your water begged from the one who has completed your pilgrimage. They all attain heaven. Now, o Mother mine, if you do not give me a hand, who else shall I turn to?)

He who cleanses himself,

By wading in your flow,

Attains the paradise,

By this embrace, o Bhagirathi!

(O Mother, one gains entry into the Golden City even if one unable to reach you in person obtains bottled water of your stream and splashes it on one's head. Please grant me a palmful of your water so that I can purify myself of my misdeeds, if any, as a human being.)

On your embankment,

If one grinds 'n smears sandalwood paste,

By the angels in heaven,

One's hammock'd be rocked, o Bhagirathi!

(A devotee somehow reaching your banks and anointing himself with the sandalwood paste ground on a rock by your embankment earns the privilege of being pampered by heavenly nymphs after his death. I am singing this litany in praise of your powers, o Mother. Please hurry to redeem me, for I'm about to die an unworthy death.)

If one gulps a drop of Ganga water,

At the moment of one's death,

One's soul boards a glider,

'n soars to paradise straight, o Varanasi!

(At the time of one's death, if one is fortunate enough to gulp a drop of your water, o Mother, one is promptly flown to heaven. That is not all -)

Even if a splinter of one's bone,

Reaches the Ganga bank,

Never'll ramble any of his clan,

As a wraith by a bane, o Bhagirathi!

(O Mother, one might not be able to reach your bank alive or one's body could not be brought to your vicinity for cremation. However, even if a fragment of one's bone can be immersed in your stream, one's entire lineage would be graced and none of the clan would ever die an untimely, unfulfilled death; he would not become a spectre. But how will even a grain of my bone reach you? Have mercy on me and sanctify me right here, o Mother!)

Blessed are the birds of the blue,

Soaring above your surge;

Purified of the sins, as of those

Dipping in your stream, o Bhagirathi!

(O Mother, one who bathes in your stream even once, one who tastes a drop of your water when dying and even the one who dies while on a pilgrimage to you, all attain salvation. Even if a splinter of one's bone is immersed in your flow, one is saved from being hurled into the purgatory. But your greatness goes far beyond that. Your divinity is so pervading that even a bird flying over your span, and thus casting its shadow on your flow, is graced by your glory. Am I to be the only one to be deprived of that bounty?)

Blessed was Bhagirath that

You flowed down the Divine Mount,

And redeemed the nether,

The mortal and the sublime, o Bhagirathi!

(By the entreaties of king Bhagirath, you cascaded down the heavenly peak on to the earth for the salvation of all the three regions of this universe, the abodes of the mortals, Gods and the Naag community, i.e., the earth, paradise and the pit. Am I going to be the only unfortunate one? I am crying out to you, not to gush down the heavens but, only to fount from the earth.)

Although Father Divine is by my side,

In the moment of my death,

Ruined is my demise, for you're too far,

Beyond my reach, o Varanasi!

(Today, at the hour of my death, God stands by my side. But the agony of dying without being sanctified by you will torment my soul forever. Therefore, o Mother, come, come, come!)

Although belated some came to you,

Ma, you redeemed them all;

Happy I'll be to lie near your feet,

As a lifeless rock, o Bhagirathi!

(O Mother, though late I am, I surrender myself to you. You have bestowed salvation even on those who were late in seeking your shelter. Even if you do not grant me salvation, I shall not complain. Deprived of your holy touch I may not attain paradise, but even if I can lie at your feet in the form of a lifeless rock, I'll be very happy forever.)

After committing this sinful act being a Hindu, as he recites an impassioned hymn to Bhagirathi, symbolizing purity and salvation, an otherworldly phenomenon occurs ensuing the quacking of earth and springing forth of the water from the ground during the climax of the narrative. As the internal conflict intensifies, having secretly inflicted a mortal wound, he becomes an epithet of sacrificial offering to the divine river, mirroring the magnitude of the inner turmoil and the struggle against religious compromise. Embarking on this spatial odyssey, the narrative seamlessly integrates oral traditions, as uttered verses become performative acts within the spatial context. This integration accentuates the profound connection between speech, emotion and the sacred, crafting a poignant exploration of the complexities inherent in the struggle for spiritual purity within the socio-religious context of the story. Thereafter, The title “O Bhagirathi” gains profound significance within the provided narrative as Rajde Gadhavi, a charan minstrel in the imperial court of Junagadh, invokes the divine river, Bhagirathi (another name for the Ganga), in a poignant plea for eradicating his sin of performing aazaan at the mosque, “Allah...hu.... Akbar” unwillingly under dire circumstances. The narrative, therefore, justifies the title by portraying a transformative moment, where the charan seeks salvation

in the embrace of holy river, illustrating a deep connection between the mortal and the divine.

The tale unfurls as a complex tapestry of spatial elements confined within the territories of Junagadh, wherein distinct geographical locations, constituting the first space serve as pivotal narrative anchors. These instances of real or physical space takes center stage as the initial scene establishes the mosque as a focal point, echoing the daily call to prayer and creating a cultural nexus that resonates with the communal rhythm of the town. Concurrently, the imperial court of Junagadh emerges as a vital locale, revealing complicated power structures ingrained in the urban landscape. The minaret, as a physical extension of the mosque, assumes a symbolic significance, epitomizing the apex of divine expression where the emperor's inquiry into the authenticity of the mullah's call serves as the evocative stage for the central conflict of the narrative. The imagined space, complexly interlinked with geographical locations, contributes to the nuanced layers of the multi-dimensional narrative architecture. As Rajde ascends the minaret, the mosque's periphery undergoes a metamorphosis, becoming a thematic stage for the unfolding of ritualistic practices. Devotees engaged in ablutions transform this envisioned space into a canvas where religious ethos converge harmoniously with cultural traditions, intensifying the narrative's intellectual depth. Edward Soja's concept of thirdspace, which entails the convergence of tangible and imagined realms, materializes in the narrative through the allegorical potency of Bhagirathi, the divine river. Despite its absence in the physical realm, it saturates the narrative with themes of integrity and transcendence, functioning as a bridge that links mortal experiences to a higher, redemptive realm. This ethereal dimension imparts an elevated quality to the narrative, transcending the constraints of tangible landscapes.

The spatialized tensions embedded in religious identity, exemplified by the clash of Hindu and Islamic rituals, underscore the pervasive influence of spatial configurations. Emotions become an integral part of the spatial fabric as he grapples with the moral consequences of his actions, offering a meticulous portrayal of the concept of lived experience of space as given by Henry Lefebvre. Additionally, Richard Schechner's ideas on performance and performativity find resonance in the minaret's role as a dramatic setting for his sacrificial act, where the physicality of the space becomes intrinsic to the performance. In conclusion, the narrative intricately navigates diverse spatial dimensions,

providing a multifaceted exploration that enriches the story by delving into the intricacies of religious harmony and discord within the specific socio-cultural context of Junagadh.

From the remarks generated by the author, a critical acknowledgment is made regarding the unresolved location of the event, with Amadavad and Junagadh mentioned as potential but unverified sites. The coexistence of a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and a shrine of Rajde Pir is highlighted, emphasizing the mystical nature of the location. The author introduces a charani ode attributing the event to Emperor 'Mehmadshah' and a charan named Rajde, providing historical context to the narrative. The scarcity of original duhas raises suspicions about the quoted verses' authenticity, a doubt strengthened through linguistic scrutiny. A parallel is drawn with the composition of Ganga-Lahari by poet Jagannath, invoking the river Mandakini for vindication. The note contributes depth to the narrative, intertwining historical, literary and symbolic dimensions while acknowledging uncertainties inherent in the storytelling process.

The narrative "The Indomitable Twelve" evokes a deep resonance capturing the essence of an exceptional camaraderie that unfolded in the village of Ambaradi four hundred and fifty years ago. The storyline unravels the saga of twelve companions, spearheaded by the indomitable Visal Raba, whose unshakable bond finds symbolic representation in their collective commitment to live and stand united even in the face of death. This friendship surpasses the ordinary, resembling an ingot of iron meticulously tempered into twelve tenacious links, forging an unbreakable chain.

Visal Raba, a revered figure in the narrative, belongs to the Parajiya charans, a community with ties to seven villages. His divine aura is manifested in his physical appearance, wielding a trident, halter, sword and a twin-edged dagger, adorned with a garland of flowers. Under the supposed protection of the Mother Supreme, the goddess of universal vitality, he is distinguished by a solemn vow never to bow before mortals. His reverence being solely reserved for his sacred sword, adds a spiritual dimension to his character. As he embarks on consultation with the sultan, his fearless demeanour, dressed in dusty garments, contrasts with the subservient courtiers, signifying his allegiance to a higher power. The clash of ideologies with emperor unfolds into the breakage of a fierce battle, as he firmly refuses to bow before him, asserting that only his sword and Allah deserve obeisance.



Fig: 26 Visal Raba's consultation with Sultan

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The imperial confrontation occurs on the outskirts of Ambaradi, where the sultan's tent is pitched within the close proximity of the community, creating a stark contrast between rural simplicity of the village and the imposing presence of the royal monarch. Through the lens of David Harvey's concept of spatiality, this arrangement serves to accentuate the profound clash of cultures and power dynamics inherent in the narrative. The battlefield itself becomes an arena where the strength of Raba and his comrades confronts the ruling armies, heightening the broader notions of revolt and the struggle against tyranny.

The King's regret over the impending tragedy introduces a layer of remorse and accountability in the narrative, as he struggles with the consequences of his decisions, while the Vizier's strategic suggestion to avoid direct confrontation by shifting the army unveils the political dynamics at play. The act of breaking through the rear bulwark and facing the enemy head-on, reinforces bravery and selflessness, as these warriors willingly embrace the grave dangers for the sake of their principles. The emperor's realization of defeat in the face of the swift and exceptional heroism displayed by the courageous warriors, prompts him to issue orders for his army to release arrows and firelocks, signalling the authorities of power, as he being initially remorseful, succumbs to the pressures of maintaining legitimacy.

An in-depth narration of benevolence and steadfast resolve unfolds, as these eleven charan men and the one belonging to mendicant's community of bawa, seamlessly blend their unique selves into the collective whole throughout the narrative, embodying themes of devotion and the pursuit of principles that elevate the narrative into an exploration of the human spirit and strength. The title adeptly demonstrates their staunch determination as they confront the armed force with sheer valour, opting to engage in battle solely with swords against a superior adversary. The intense oath they undertook, pledging "The twelve of us shall live and die together. We shall not let a moment separate us even when we die", emerges as the guiding principle propelling them into a conflict where they ultimately surrender themselves in reverence to the sanctity of their companionship and honor. The descriptor "indomitable" precisely captures their unassailable spirit, making it an eloquent choice that echoes throughout the pages of this historical epic.

The narrative weaves together various dimensions as defined by Edward Soja's spatial trialectics and Henri Lefebvre's production of space in everyday life. In terms of physical and lived spaces, the village of Ambaradi serves as the anchor for the narrative, portraying tangible and grounded settings where daily activities like cattle grazing and farming unfold. The village, with its simple yet vibrant lifestyle, becomes a metaphorical representation of the crucible in which the depictions of invincible brotherhood was forged. Imagined spaces in this story is deeply connected to spirituality. The village chora, where Keshavgar, the wise recluse, chants hymns during the daily dusk prayer, introduces a sacred dimension to the narrative, transcending its physical existence by redefining it into a sanctuary that embodies characters' collective faith and undeterred devotion. This space becomes a focal point for their interaction with the divine, by indicating their religious perseverance that endures them throughout their journey.

"One who dies within a drawn circle

Or freezes oneself in the Himalayas

Or gets oneself sawn by a hacksaw

Or from Bherav peak leaps to death

Or goes down dueling a maned lion

Or defending the virtue of a woman

Or protecting a cow, or one's green:

Gritty one who thus meets the end,

Hark o Visal, he is the one blessed,

Assured of Heaven, after his death.”

(“O Visal-bha, one of the following ways can ensure one a place in the heavenly abode after one's death:

Either one's soul departs while the body lies at a predetermined site

Or one freezes and shrinks one's limbs to die by frostbite in the icy Himalayas

Or one gets oneself sawn alive by the giant hacksaw in the holy city of Kashi

Or one plunges to death from the Bherav cliff of mount Girnar

Or one lets oneself get killed while fighting barehanded with a lion

Or one gives life in order to protect the virtue of a woman, a cow or one's estate.

Only those who meet death in one of the above manners qualify for an entry into the paradise, o blessed Visal.”)

These religious folk songs chanted by him symbolizes orality contributing to the performative aspect of the narrative, connecting language and speech to the spatial dynamics of the story. After listening to the knowledge offered by Keshavgar, the circle drawn on the earth by Visal Raba for attainment of paradise after their death, again symbolizes imagined space, representing both their sacred pact and the arena for their final collective sacrifice. This geometric space becomes a powerful emblem for the boundaries of their kinship, fostering a sense of unity beyond the world of matter and substance. The concept of thirdspace is exemplified within the confines of the crematory grounds, where Tejarav Soya's self-immolation within this space transforms it into a metaphor for the inexorable flow of time and the cyclical rhythm of existence and demise. Here, the physicality of the self-sacrificial gesture intertwines with the envisioned domain

of an everlasting bond, forging a nuanced synthesis of tangible action and abstract imagination.

The retrospective author's note, dating back to 1924 or 1925, offers a contemplative look at the remnants of the legendary events woven into the narrative. The village of Ambaradi, situated near Salaya, stands as a tangible testament to these events, hosting a miniature shrine that marks the hallowed spot where Visal is believed to have drawn the sacred circle. The author meticulously unveils a poignant detail in the form of twelve headstones thoughtfully arranged on a mound, serving as a solemn commemoration of the enduring bond shared by the twelve friends. Adjacent to this, a mausoleum stands as a testament to the memory of Mohabbatkhan, the sultan's eldest son, whose life reportedly met its end at the hands of Visal during the battle. Further enriching the narrative is the revelation of a buried well, once steeped in the belief that its waters bestowed bravery upon those who partook, introducing an element of mysticism to the tapestry of the story. The deliberate act of the sultan burying the well suggests an intentional effort to suppress the source of courage, adding a layer of symbolism to the tale. The author delves into the lore surrounding Visal, unveiling details such as his adherence to eighty-four vows and his extraordinary ability to blunt an enemy's sword. Grounded in legend, these details amplify the mythic dimensions of his character and the impact of the events that unfolded in this village. The note, with its historical echoes, enhances the narrative by bridging the gap between the fictional and the tangible, compelling readers to reflect on the enduring legacy of "The Indomitable Twelve" etched into the very fabric of Ambaradi.

The title "Revenge" aptly conveys the thematic essence of the narrative, delineating a relentless cycle of retribution that unfolds through a complex web of family bonds and the unyielding quest for fairness. The story, framed within the contours of Arathila village, traces the repercussions of a seemingly trivial act of the slaughtering a beloved pet bunny, which catalyses a profound and inexorable vendetta throughout the narrative. The initial transgression, committed by Sonara Bati, sets in motion a tragic sequence of events leading to Vesoor's death and culmination of Pithash's relentless pursuit of vengeance.

Pithash, a prominent figure in the narrative unveils his life-changing journey, marked by early tragedy and eventual redemption. Raised by a grief-stricken mother, he

embraces the mantle of a minstrel, honing his poetic prowess in the cosmopolitan court of Chittod. Bearing witness to the brutal demise of his father, orchestrated by the hands of his uncle at the tender age of four, etches indelible scars on the canvas of his childhood. This intense experience becomes the fertile soil for the germination of a vindictive quest deep within his psyche. His mother's lament "Memories are short-lived indeed! It seems happiness makes it easier for ones to forget the past" sets the stage for his return to Arathila, serving as an influential reminder to avenge his father's assassination, where he beheads Sonara and, paradoxically, positions himself as an unexpected harbinger of remission through a strategic intervention that arrests the cyclic cadence of reprisal.

The narrative trajectory takes a precipitous turn when the scions of Sonara, Nagajan and Hameer, manifest as bearers of familial discord, exemplifying the never ending cycle of violence inherent in their family's strife. They adopt the responsibility of vindicators, spurred by an innate drive to address the death of their father, Sonara, at the hands of Pithash. Functioning as relentless antagonists, they actively participate to strike the continuing cycle initiated with the slaughter of Pithash's pet bunny and furthered by their cousin's own actions. In the climactic stature, the brothers' unswerving commitment to their roles as agents of redress and their eventual tribulations for taking revenge of their father's murder, reverberates tragic consequences of actions woven into the delicate fabric of familial relationships. Facilitated by a poetic prowess that projects the intermittent nature of retaliation, transcending generations, their exchange of duha verses while confronting Pithash at the shrine on the outskirts in a moment laden with tension and pressure, serve as a powerful expression of their passionate pursuit for justice.

Too high is the price for the estimate,

O Pithash of Chitrod!

You'd adorn her with the bangles

Only in your life to come!

(O Pithash, o resident of Chitrod, your asking for an evaluation is going to prove too costly. Now you'll be able to slip them on her wrists only in your next life.)

Although you ran and ran,

The oasis remained a mirage;

Your way-worn limbs, o Pithash,

Now buckling in the desert sand!

(O Pithash, you tried hard to attain happiness but failed. It was like running after a mirage when thirsty in a desert and not finding the oasis. Exhausted and parched, you'd now die in the ocean of sand.)

A frog that clammers and croaks

Over a pit of snakes,

Has only moments, o Pithash,

And not an hour, to live!

(O Pithash, a frog that leaps and lands on a snake pit has only moments to live. He cannot expect to live longer.)

Joy, costumes 'n verdant groves,

Coaches, cavalry 'n serenades,

Empire too, o Pithash, give up you must,

And barefoot must depart!

(O Pithash, giving up this life of glee, luxurious costumes and romantic sprees in lush green groves, forsaking the coaches, chariots, horses and melody-makers, oh, even your entire estate, you must depart on foot for your last journey.)

A snoozing goat

In a bed of shimmering leaves,

Has only moments, O Pithash,

Not hours, to live!

(Butchers make beds of tender leaves for the goats marked for slaughter. The goats snoozing and chewing these tender leaves do not have long to live.)

These verses create an imagined space where grievances and familial discord are articulated through lyrical means, connecting the characters' inner world with the geographical locations. These oral exchanges serve as powerful mediums for the expressing emotions, highlighting the intersection of language and spatial dynamics in the narrative. On hearing this conversation and after getting insights of the further happenings, Pithash remains fearless, expressing concern for his wife's well-being, "Brothers, the charan woman mine will keep waiting for the bangles and, in the end, kill herself when she'd learn what happened, if you trust me, let me go home to hand her the bangles. I'll come back." In the face of Nagajan's skepticism and Hameer's steadfast faith in Pithash's character, a succinct yet consequential debate ensued, culminating in Pithash prevailing and persuading them to await his presence at the shrine located at the outskirts. In a display of cultural resilience, he stood unalterable on his pledge, returning to them for facing his impending fate. His resolute adherence to his vow, resembling the stark qualities of a true kathi man, serves as a stimulating reflection of moral intricacies ingrained within the narrative. However, a twist in the tale emerges when his wife strategically intervenes with the arrangement of horses for his escape, thereby halting this abrupt cycle of violation and offering a glimpse of reconciliation through her strategic foresight, stating, "Fair play! Do recall, my man! When you'd gone and killed their father, you had three horses and two bodyguards at your disposal, and auntie had helped you escape. What about these two? How far can they run before being nabbed? The king's camels would soon dart out in hot pursuit. We cannot let the enemies die a dog's death! They must, as you did, get a head start. Therefore, the horses. Brothers, get over with what you want to do and set saddles. These chargers cannot be overtaken even by the camels of Chittod though swift as lightning they are."

The three men stood transfixed. As though drained of the last drop of their energy, they could not speak. They were speechless in the face of a woman like an incarnation of Mother Goddess of the universe. The culmination of their narrative arc transpires as Nagajan and Hameer sheath their daggers and reverently bow before her, subsequently rising to embrace their cousin in a heartfelt warmth. Henceforth, Sonara's wife plays a silent yet malevolent role, embodying a sinister undercurrent of manipulation by providing tacit approval to the cycle of revenge, while Pithash's wife transforms the narrative, embodying redemption through strategic intervention halting bloodshed. The thematic interplay of consistent conflicts, dark motifs, deceit, justice and righteousness form a scholastic exploration of nuanced human experiences embedded within the narrative.

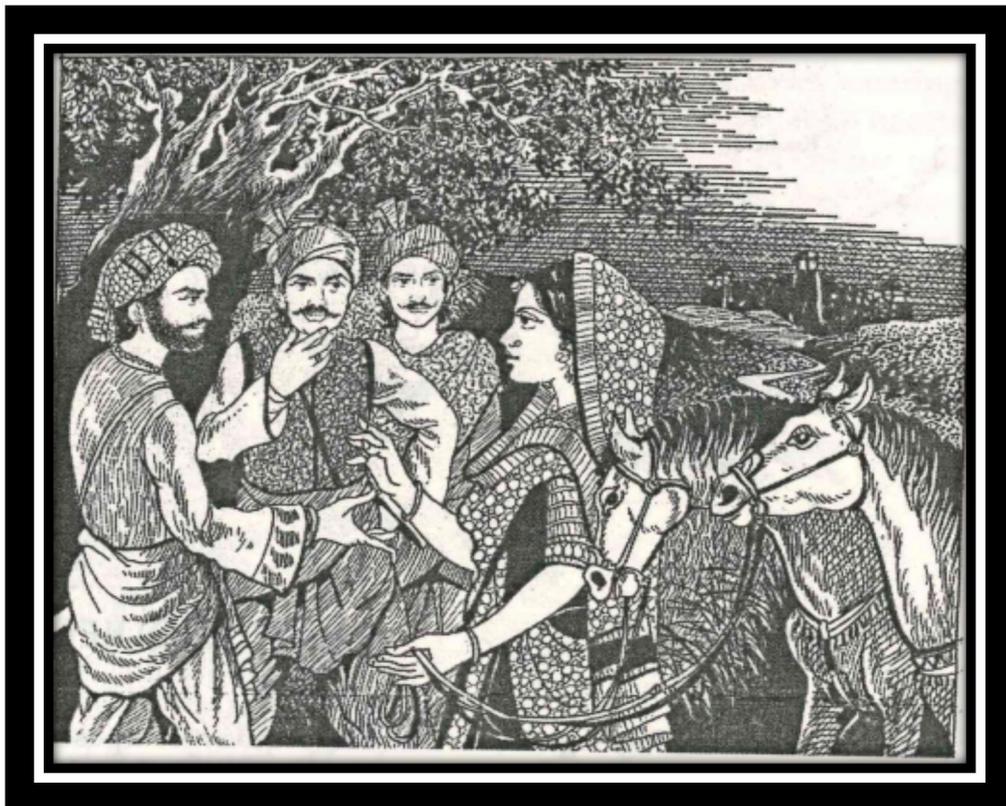


Fig. 27 Pithash's wife transforming the narrative

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

“The Revenge” unfurls against a backdrop of intricate spatial dimensions, with the physical space vividly depicted through the settings of Arathila village, the orchard, the town of Chittod and the shrine. Arathila, with its once-thriving community reduced to

desolation, becomes a tangible canvas where the characters' lives intersect and diverge. The orchard within this village emerges as a critical sub-setting, where Sonara's seemingly hospitable gesture turns sinister as the innocuous picnic becomes the site of a pivotal act of beheading Vesoor, and subsequently the place where Sonara was killed by Pithash after ages as an avenger to his father's homicide. As the aftermath of the initial infraction unfolds, the story shifts its gaze towards Chittod, a cosmopolitan setting that starkly contrasts with the rustic simplicity of Arathila, where Pithash seeks solace and leveraging the virtuosity of his poetic skills, rises to prominence as a minstrel within the esteemed circles of the royal court. The shrine on the outskirts becomes a crucial locale for the final confrontation between Pithash and his vengeful cousins, Hameer and Nagajan. This setting, with its solitude and ominous atmosphere, provides a dramatic backdrop for the resolution of the recurring theme of wrath and enmity.

Arathila's ruin serves as a poignant reflection of the inhabitants' daily struggles, symbolized by the devastated mound that served as a melancholic testament to its historical upheavals, embodying the palpable manifestations of lived spaces. The orchard, in its evolving nature from innocence to tragedy, captures the essence of perceived space, exemplifying the transformative journey of the characters, encapsulating everyday emotions of tension, revenge and potential redemption. David Harvey's notion of spatiality is reflected in the societal contrasts between Arathila and Chittod, portraying the dynamics of power and cultural clashes. The narrative, delves into the technicalities of human condition and morality through the lens of enduring conflicts and familial dynamics, offering a profound reflection on the interplay of space, emotions and societal structures.

The narrative "A Requiem" unfolds with the enchanting imagery of the river Bhadar in the Sorath region, likened to a winsome Kathi woman paying tribute to the Sun-God. On a perilous cliff overlooking the river, Manasiya Wala engages in playful interactions with vultures and hawks, displaying a unique bond with nature. Amidst the picturesque setting, the story introduces him, lacking an heir and targeted by greedy cousins eyeing his estate. The socio-political backdrop emerges as the British Empire enters Kathiyawad, leading to his summons by Lang-sahib. As the resonating echoes of British cavalry hooves reverberate on the tarmac road, the opium enthusiasts disperse, each offering whimsical excuses to evade the impending menace. Amidst a chorus of

laughter, squire derisively taunts his Makarani warriors, whimsically proposing that they divert their attention to alternative tasks. Meanwhile, the intrepid leader of the mercenaries boldly proclaims their preparedness to confront the encroaching British forces by issuing a brazen threat to blow up Rajkot. The traction and defiance in this city become spaces conceived through political and cultural lenses, highlighting the power dynamics at play.

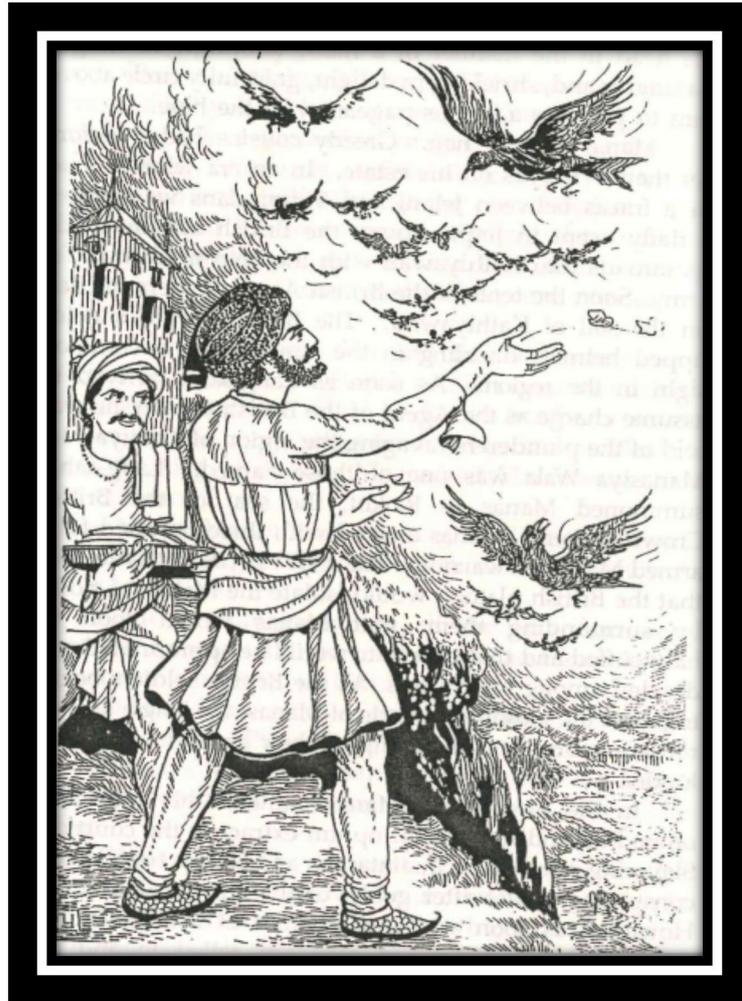


Fig. 28 Manasiya Wala Engaged in playful interactions with vultures and hawks

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

Manasiya Wala, a central figure in the Kathiyawadi town of Jetpur, emerges as a distinctive character deeply rooted in the natural landscapes. As a member of this community, his connection with the river Bhadar is symbolic, reminiscent of the lore surrounding Kamarhans, who vowed to wed the river. His unorthodox approach to life is evident in his affinity for feeding loaves to kites, contrasting with the conventional acts of

charitable hearts or lovers of beauty. Positioned atop a dangerous cliff near the river, his manor stands as a testament to his audacious lifestyle. The intrusion of the British Empire adds layers of tension and defiance to the storyline, as his resilience against Lang-sahib's directive becomes a testament to his steadfast dedication, reflecting a conceived space shaped by imperial authority. His stern and fierce response reflects his courage and confrontation against colonialism, displaying his potency in the face of impending British rule by throwing light on the depth of his commitment to resist foreign domination.

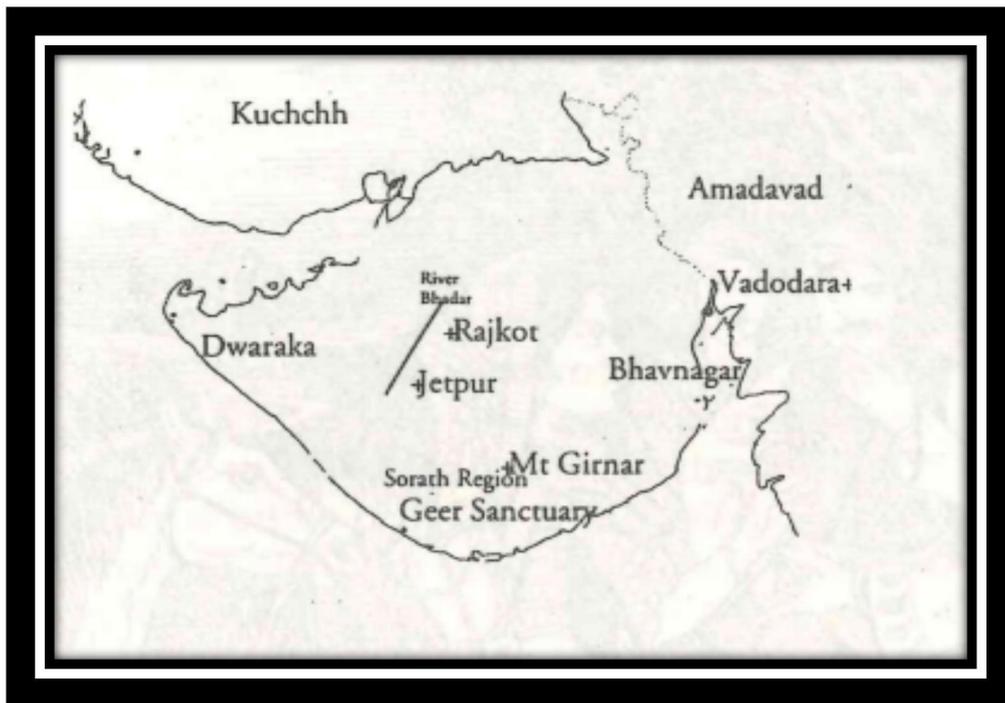


Fig. 29 The location of Rajkot where Manasiya Wala was being summoned by Britishers

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The tension intensifies as British soldiers patrol the grounds, with the clang of sabers and armor creating an ominous atmosphere. After hours of suspense, they finally disperse, declaring arrival of Meraman-jee, the king of Rajkot. Despite him informing Manas about Lang-sahib's permission for his departure and suggesting a return to Jetpur, he insists on paying respects to the officer, highlighting his determination in the face of imperial rule. However, this boldness triggers jealousy among his cousins, leading to a manipulative plot that labels him as insane, resulting to his isolation in a desolate castle. The tragedy reaches its climax, where, defying societal norms, he performs a unique and symbolic act of self-sacrifice, offering his own flesh to the birds. Undeterred, he engages

in a dramatic dialogue with a soaring kite from his prison cell, beckoning the vulture. Carving out a chunk of flesh, he tosses it out of the barred window, representing a metaphorical communion with nature and a prelude to his eventual act of giving up his life. The verses sung at his funeral further signifies the imagined spaces in the narrative, combining elements of mourning, celebration and a profound connection to the natural world, portraying his life and death as a complexed poetic symphony. As the pyre was ignited, a charan broke into trilling elegiac duhas, serving as a powerful medium for expressing emotions and paying tribute. This oral layer adds authenticity and cultural richness to the narrative.

The vultures of the mount Girnar;

Migrated to the Abu mount,

Dead was the feeder of his flesh.

The master of Jetpur town,

(The vultures living on the peaks of mount Girnar today winged away to mount Abu because the heroic one who had fed them with his own flesh was no more.)

O Manas, you marked your forehead

With a pledge to Mother Goddess,

To brim Her cranium bowl with blood,

By slamming yourself with a pistol!

(O Manas, how could you depart so soon? Did you forget that you had secretly pledged to the Mother Goddess that you would fill her sacrificial cranium bowl with your blood by shooting yourself with a blowgun?)

You beheaded ahirs in scores,

With the razor edge of your sword;

By festoons of their idled sabres,

Your wedding pendal is adorned!

(You beheaded so many ahirs that you could rig festoons of their weapons to decorate your wedding bower.)

The gunshot volleys 'n slashing swords,

On your battling trunk;

Oh! I can't bear singing a requiem,

O Manas, of a death unsung.

(O Manasiya Wala, what an unusual exit you have made! Why did you die amid a hush? Your death should have come about as an aftermath of long and loud volleys of gunshots or the clangs of the swords battering your headless yet battling trunk!)

To behold you riding in,

Surged the city 'n clambered the folks;

That should have been the day,

O Manas, to bid your farewells!

(You should have departed on the glorious day when you entered the city of Rajkot and defied Lang-sahib. That day men and women had thronged and crowded the windows and balconies along your route to catch a glimpse of you.)

Circling above the blaze of your pyre,

Vultures flap their wings,

To snatch a chunk of your flesh,

Swoop the soaring kites, o Manas!

(Shakti, the Divine Force manifest in the form of kites, is bowing down on your flaming pyre and repletes herself by consuming the flesh of a brave one like you.)

The title “A Requim” is profoundly justified chronicling the life and demise of Manasiya Wala. In the narrative, Edward Soja’s spatial concepts come to life through the geographical locations being vividly depicted in the real landscapes of Sorath region where the river Bhadar gracefully meanders. The town of Jetpur, situated on a cliff overlooking the river, becomes a tangible setting, emphasizing the natural beauty of this physical space. The concept of thirdspace finds resonance with the protagonist’s interactions with the river and birds, grounded in physicality, carrying a deeper symbolic and imagined significance. David Harvey’s spatial theory, highlighting the uneven development of spaces influenced by power relations, finds resonance in the clash between the British Empire and local forces within Kathiyawad. The narrative delves into multifaceted themes, exploring the influence of power structures and revolt against colonialism. This clash, exemplified by Manasiya Wala’s summoning by Lang-sahib, vividly portrays the intricate web of political tension and obstruction, underscoring the alliances formed amidst this spatial contestation. The subsequent scenes in Rajkot showcases the ramifications of non-compliance, with his bold assembly of three hundred Makarani warriors challenging the British presence, emphasizing the facets of cultural pride and spirit of opposition. The cunning manoeuvres of envious relatives leading to his seclusion in an abandoned fortress, reflects a conceived space where societal betrayal and mental torment contribute to the conceptualization of his tragic end. The act of self-destruction, as he offers his flesh to the vultures and other birds, delves into a space of mortality and transcendence, seamlessly blending the natural world with the spiritual realm. Ultimately, the narrative paints a complex portrait, weaving together these themes to depict a tale of political tumult, societal treachery and the enormous nature of human life.



Fig. 30 The villagers fighting collectively for Sudamada town

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The narrative “Kaniya, the Bearer of Burden” expands against the backdrop of a dangerous threat- a horde of bandits, armed with muskets, charging to plunder the town. Squire Shadul, leading with a handful of men, faces the challenge as most of his forces were away. Humiliation loomed as the village lacked both weapons and a substantial defense force. As the townspeople prepare to confront them, Shadul, in despair, contemplates the inevitable disgrace. However, the community mobilizes, with women grabbing threshing batons and children preparing to defend their town. The villagers, led by a delegation of elders, square up to the squire, displaying the combined ownership, “Patron mine, we all co-own Sudamada town! Remember the day when on the bank of river Nimbhani, it was declared that Sudamada belonged to all of us collectively! From that day all who live here have shared the ownership of the town. Your living in the

manor and my living in a shack doesn't change that pact! Our heads might roll defending the town; so be it! The town is ours to live in as much to die for!" declared a woman, addressing the ties that strongly bounded them amidst the tragedy. Beneath all these, Kaniya's wife, came forward, boldly declaring, "And Squire Shadul, sire mine, my husband Kaniya will beat the battledrum to rouse everyone to fight. He too owns a share of Sudamada, lest you forget!" and then turning towards his husband with adoring eyes, she stated, "You oaf! If you don't die today fighting for Sudamada, just don't bother to come home tonight! If you come, I shan't let you in!" On hearing these words of his wife, he started beating the barrels of a large sized drum, that exploded in the spatter making the sky rumble.

Kaniya, an untouchable sweeper, emerges as a symbolic representation of challenges extending beyond the physical defense of Sudamada village. His marginalized status within the social hierarchy vividly signifies the weight of discrimination and prejudice. Simultaneously, he undertakes the responsibility of sounding the battle drum, surpassing societal expectations and embodying the essence of communal unity. As the looters approached, the town marshalled swiftly, fortifying the gate and strategically positioning swordsmen. Led by the formidable Lakha, the bandits successfully breached the gate, unleashing a torrent of chaos that ignited a fierce battle within the town. Departing from his typical roles and responsibilities, Kaniya, known for his cleaning duties, defied expectations by seizing a sword and actively participating in the defense alongside other brave individuals. Empowered by the rhythmic drumfire, a courageous carpenter took up a musket and with a single shot, eliminated Lakha. This decisive action remarkably shifted the tide of the battle, marking a pivotal juncture in the town's collective struggle.

In the middle of the unfolding chaos, Squire Shadul, patrolling the inner flank, fell victim to a sudden ambush that rendered him unconscious. In the wake of this perilous situation, the squire, upon regaining consciousness, reflected on the gravity of the predicament, stating, "Listen, my gallant men. With even one of us alive, if our village was ever ransacked, our names would forever stand in disgrace." Meanwhile, being engaged in a dark and intense encounter, Kaniya, stumbles upon the attackers while searching for the squire. He draws Shadul's sword and fights valiantly, ultimately saving the squire's life. However, this act of heroism came at a great cost, as he succumbed to

twenty-five gashes. His sacrificial bravery emerges as the linchpin of Sudamada's defense, solidifying his role as a bearer of burdens. Kaniya stands as a central figure in the narrative, embodying both social exclusion and remarkable strength. Positioned at the lowest societal tier, he challenges conventions by assuming a profound role in the defense of the town, breaking stereotypical biases. His standing in the society undergoes a significant shift as he transcends his designated role, breaking free from conventional presumptions. As the drum-beater in the narrative, he plays a pivotal role in rallying the town against the imminent danger. His heroic deeds on the battlefield, including wielding a sword and making the ultimate sacrifice, becomes a catalyst for the collective endurance that defines the village's defense, underscoring the narrative's investigation of individual agency and the obstacles faced by the community as a whole.



Fig. 31 Kaniya, an untouchable sweeper sounding battle drums

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The following day, Shadul's court assembled to acknowledge the fallen. The minstrel, ashamed for not singing the praise for Kaniya, revised his song, acknowledging his crucial role in saving the village. The narrative, thus culminates in reflecting the unsung heroism of all those who challenge societal norms.

O hardy battle braves, said Shadul

To the wielders of steely blades,

Guarded by you, had the gateway been razed,

The gallant ones would have stood disgraced!

(Shadul said to his warriors, "O mighty brave men, o ones adept at using the swords, in spite of your guard, had the enemy demolished the portal of the town, you would have stood in disgrace for the rest of your life.")

Virile son of Loona so proclaimed,

Hark; mark my words, all my men;

With the brave alive, had the town been ravaged,

The gallant ones would have stood disgraced!

(Shadul, the brave son of Loona, said: "Listen, my gallant men. With even one of us alive if our village is ever ransacked, our names would forever stand in disgrace.")

Gritty robbers from Maliya town

Clambered up the bastion wall;

But seeing Shadul wage a fiery war,

All his men too stood tall.

(When the tenacious robbers from Maliya resolutely assaulted the fortification of Sudamada, valiant Shadul defied death and instilled courage in the hearts of many of his men.)

You foiled every move of the foes

And held Sudamada's fort intact;

Yet Shadula, you emerged unscathed;

O king of khavad clan, kudos to you!

(Shadul held the fort of Sudamada in such a skilful manner that the enemy's' manoeuvres were foiled. Even after waging a fierce battle he managed to emerge unhurt. Glory to your name, o king of khavad clan!)

Maliya and Sudamada collided head on and clashed

As had the battle of Nagar against Bhuj once raged;

Aspirant for the hand of a belle Divine,

Sweeper of the soil swept the frontline.

(The clash between the marauders from Maliya and the residents of Sudamada reminded one of the great battle that had once long ago raged between the mighty kingdoms of Bhuj and Nagar. Aspiring to wed a heavenly nymph by sacrificing himself in action, the sweeper of the filth rushed to the forefront to take on the enemy hordes.)

Though his fair mate forbade,

The zealot wasn't held back.

Even as the army embarked,

The rider led from the front.

While dawdled and watched,

Those who bade him strum,

Plunged ahead! Dashed on!

The beater of the drum!

(His wife beseeched him not to take up arms but he could not be restrained. The army was still re-grouping for a counter- attack when he mounted his horse and plunged amid the enemies. Those who had assigned him the role of a drummer were not yet fully roused by the spatter of the drum when the drummer reached such a frenzied state that he made a dash for the frontline.)

His sword mowed the enemy horde.

Amid the battling headless trunks, dried ducts of blood.

Swapping the slashes to win a belle divine,

Strove the sweeper, in front of the line.

(He mowed down the enemy with a barrage of his sword. Ardently wanting to wed a heavenly maiden by meeting a heroic death, the sweeper strove, fought and finally died in the middle of the arena of war.)

Like him had once striven two other dregs,

Battling for Jetpur and Bhonyar towns.

Though more glorious

Was Kaniya's death.

With triumph, he blazoned Sudamada town;

And also rescued the master unhurt.

(History has recorded only two other untouchables laying down their lives while defending: One was in the battle for Jetpur town during the reign of Champraj Wala and the other in the battle of Bhonyargadh. Both the men had wielded swords to protect their respective towns. But Kaniya's sacrifice is unique because he not only brought glory of triumph to the town but also rescued and protected his master from death.)

Diverse themes converge in the story as Kaniya's wife serves as a vital channel for empowerment, urging him to assert his ownership of the village, emphasizing the significant role played by women in challenging systemic inequities. Shardul, galvanizing residents irrespective of divisions to defend their town against intruders, emerges as a chief figure embodying solidarity in his leadership role. Kaniya's act introduces the theme of individual sacrifice, transforming him from a man belonging to an economically lower stature into a hero, whose selfless deeds transcended barriers of all kinds. The narrative not only weaves a tale of a societal defense against the plunderers but also probes into the intricacies of injustice faced by the disadvantaged.

The real space is primarily represented through Sudamada, a village facing an imminent threat from bandits. The town, historically significant for repelling attacks in 1750, symbolizes a shared heritage and resilience. As the looters approach, the setting shifts dynamically to different locations, such as manor gate and the battleground, that serve as tangible settings where the communal defense takes place. These localities become pivotal arenas where the villagers unite to confront the external threat, highlighting the significance of the region as a shared and mutually owned domain. The evening prayer at the temple introduces a religious dimension, creating an imagined space where the divine aura of Lord Rama is juxtaposed against the impending darkness brought by the approaching raiders. This sacred element not only brings forth a religious dimension but also illustrates the value of community rituals during the times of crisis. Edward Soja's thirdspace is reflected in the temporal and spatial shifts in the narrative, connecting the town's struggles with historical battles in Jetpur, Bhonyargadh, Bhuj, and Nagar. These references anchor the village within a broader geographical context, establishing a continuum of hardships against external threats. The narrative weaves together the microcosm of Sudamada with the macrocosm of historical battles, reinforcing the story's thematic depth, as villagers grapple with their emotions, societal

norms and the imminent danger across time and space. Orality plays a significant role, especially through words spoken by the villagers. The woman's declaration about Kaniya, the minstrel revising his song and the quotes from Shadul are instances where oral expressions convey emotions, societal values and acknowledgments, adding authenticity and cultural richness to the narrative.

The narrative "Friendship" aptly epitomizes the title, illustrating an enduring bond between Matra Varu and Jalamsang that goes beyond adversities. The story intricately weaves a tapestry of human emotions, moral complexities and the transformative power of a true companionship. Matra Varu, a central and influential figure in the narrative, commands a prominent position as a cattle-raiser in the village of Hemal, thereby establishing his noteworthy status within the societal framework. Characterized by an amiable disposition, he consistently embodies the pivotal role of a genial host, contributing prominently to the communal fabric. His economic position is signified by the ownership of a substantial herd of buffaloes, solidifying his place in the village hierarchy. Benevolence and generosity become his defining trait, as he extends a welcoming hand to the weary traveller, showcasing an innate affability. This altruistic nature takes center stage when Jalamsang, driven by desperation, attempts theft, prompting Matra's response of redemption rather than retribution.

His unwavering amicability and forgiveness, even when faced with a potential betrayal, exemplify the depth of genuine friendship. Despite Jalamsang's initial desperate actions, his compassion not only rescues him but elevates their relationship to a level beyond mere camaraderie. The tragic event involving Matra's wife accidentally causing the death of Jalamsang's son, becomes a testament to the intricacies of human relationships, and the subsequent forgiveness, describing the resilience of their strong bond. The title serves as a fitting portrayal of the narrative, capturing the nuances of loyalty and the profound impact of genuine connections that persist, despite the obstacles and moral dilemmas encountered by the characters throughout the story.

The narrative traverses diverse geographical realms, chiefly centered in the village of Hemal, nestled in proximity to the hills of the Geer forest within the Babariyawad region. This locale is eloquently depicted as a picturesque haven, adorned with lush pastures, freshwater springs and meandering rivers, embodying the tangible landscapes in which the events transpire. The lived spaces evident in Matra Varu's daily endeavors

within the confines of his abode, encompassing the care of his mares and the practice of hospitality, particularly in the proximity of the portal and corridor, serve as poignant emblems signifying the warmth and openness inherent to his character. The aftermath of the inciting events shifts the narrative to Kuchchh, where Jalamsang assumes a proactive role fighting against prevailing injustice. The conceived space manifests in the internal conflict and decision-making process within the dilapidated house near the village Nageshari, unveiling his profound moral dilemma, as he contemplates turning into an outlaw to champion justice. The region becomes a battleground for his quest, accentuating the impact of political contexts on the unfolding events. The resolution, characterized by their reunion in sealing the fate of their friendship, occurs at the outskirts of Naliya-Kothara, showcasing how power dynamics shape the physical spaces in the story.



Fig. 32 The bedroom setting where Gagu is being killed by Matra's wife

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The author's note sheds light on the historical ambiguity surrounding the events narrated. It suggests that the story, initially attributed to Matra Varu, a vassal from the Babariya clan in the village of Hemal, may have historical inaccuracies. The story is

alternatively associated with Soora Manek, a resident of Vasai, belonging to the Vagher clan. This note introduces an intriguing layer of uncertainty, questioning the accuracy of historical accounts and emphasizing the fluid nature of storytelling, where narratives may be shaped and attributed to different individuals over time. The inclusion of this note prompts readers to consider the historical context and the reliability of the events presented in the story.

The narrative “A Word of Honour” unfolds as a tapestry woven with family honor as its central motif, encapsulating the pivotal themes of integrity and commitment, illustrated through juxtaposition of joyous wedding celebrations in the palace of Vankaner and the queen mother’s sleepless night fraught with anxiety. As a royal figure, the prince is positioned at the apex of the social hierarchy, portrayed as a protagonist whose impending marriage sets the stage for the unfolding events. The narrative revolves around his expectations showcasing his deep yearning for the arrival of maternal uncle with the long-awaited gifts and the ensuing tension as the anticipated caravan from Gamph gets delayed.

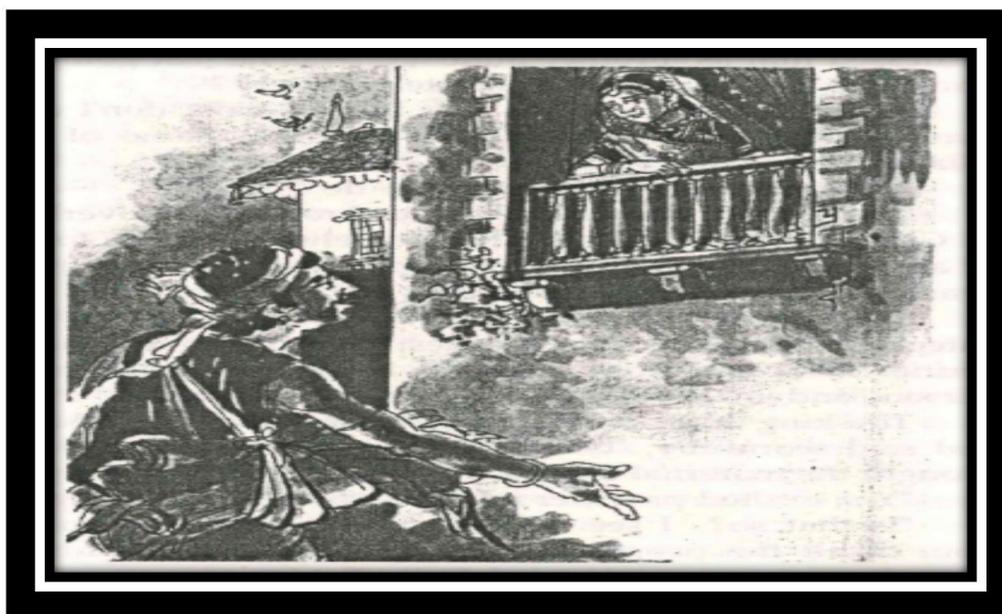


Fig. 33 The Queen mother eagerly waiting for the arrival of Gamph

Source: *The Shade Crimson*

The title gains resonance as Jeshrikarshan, an unexpected messenger from Gamph, takes center stage. Despite not bringing tangible gifts, he strategically offers the entire

village of Khasta as a symbolic wedding present, thereby upholding the honor of the family. Moreover, the contrast between the opulence of the palace and the untouchable's humble occupation highlights class distinctions, adding layers of social dynamics, societal expectations and integrity, creating a rich tapestry of human complexities and familial honour in the narrative. This gesture embodies the essence of a spoken word carrying profound weight, contrasting the perceived significance of a mere scrap of paper. The title, "A Word of Honour," aptly characterizes the narrative's investigation into the steadfast dedication of upholding reputation, ultimately leading to the revival of joyous celebrations and the triumphant reaffirmation of reliability in verbal commitments.

The narrative navigates through various spatial elements, immersing itself within the grand tapestry of the Vankaner palace, a real space that stands as the epicenter of the royal wedding celebrations. The anticipatory fervour is palpable within its opulent chambers, as the prince prepares for his ceremonies. The shehnai strains and festive songs resonate through these ornate halls, symbolizing the joyous occasion. Simultaneously, the queen mother's quarters serve as a microcosm of emotional turmoil, revealing the lived space of complex emotions entwined within the physicality of the palace. The dynamics of the narrative takes a major turn as the queen, positioned on her balcony, anxiously gazes toward the gatepost. This external space becomes a threshold of hope and apprehension, as her eyes search for any sign of the maternal uncle's arrival with the gifts. The road leading to Gamph, a symbolic pathway between the two villages charged with the anticipation of familial ties, becomes a thirdspace in the narrative, connecting the emotions of the characters with the geographical context. The final transformation in the narrative occurs when, Jeshrikarshan swiftly returns to Gamph, confronting the overlord with news of the gift. Khasta village, becomes a point of focus, symbolizing a conceived space and evolving into a metaphor for sacrifice, a tangible entity offered to salvage familial honor. The manor in Gamph and Khasta village become interconnected entities, each playing an important role in the resolution of the narrative's central conflicts.

4.3 Conclusion

The characters in *The Shade Crimson* navigate familial discord, societal pressures and personal challenges with resilience and determination, showcasing themes of feminine empowerment and familial legacies. The physical spaces depicted in the narrative, such as the manor and the village, serve as symbolic loci where inner struggles

and familial tensions are laid bare, highlighting the interplay between tradition and individual agency. Moreover, the chapter delves into the themes of benevolence, steadfast resolve and indomitable spirit portrayed by the characters in the narratives, particularly in the face of political turmoil and societal treachery. Their unwavering commitment to principles and companionship, as seen in their oath to live and die together, exemplifies the exploration of the human spirit and strength in the narrative. Additionally, the chapter discusses the transformative roles of female characters in the narratives, from embodying sinister manipulation to offering redemption through strategic interventions that halt cycles of violence and bloodshed. These thematic explorations of conflicts, justice and nuanced human experiences add layers of complexity to Meghani's storytelling.

The Orality depicted in Meghani's folk narratives is the print orality designated as secondary orality by Ong, where the print word perpetuates the folklore encapsulating its raw music and cherished value system to the upcoming generations. Furthermore, these folk narratives act as a repository of alternative history, not merely by subverting mainstream stereotypes but by actively retaining forms of remembering from the margins-those on the economic, cultural and social peripheries. It becomes a site for the articulation of voices that have often been marginalized, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse historical narrative.

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