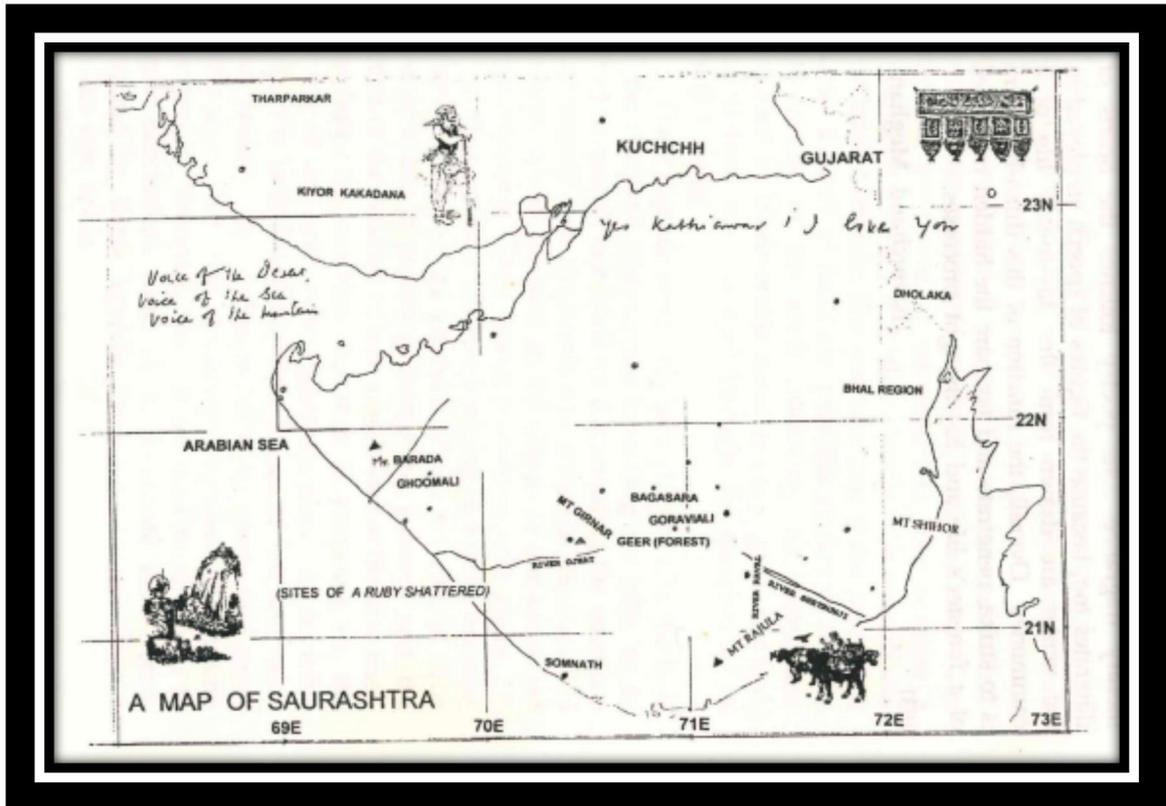


**CHAPTER V**  
**STORIED SPACES**  
**IN**  
*A RUBY*  
*SHATTERED*



This pictorial map captures spatiality in *A Ruby Shattered*

## Chapter V

### Storied Spaces in *A Ruby Shattered*

*“One who resides in Saurashtra will be able to go among any worshipper of culture and tell him proudly: My land has witnessed events that are comparable to the chronicles of England, Greece and Rome and that is why I ask to claim a space for that glorious past, not in the voice of a supplicant, but full-throated as one who demands his right.”*

- Jhaverchand Meghani

#### 5.1 Introduction

*A Ruby Shattered*, ‘Oral Traditions of Saurashtra: III’ is the third part of the trilogy. It is a collection of translated works depicting love legends in folk balladry form of Saurashtra. The folk narratives portray the life and people of Kathiawar in Saurashtra. The folk narratives in question serves as a means of preserving their inherent essence and poetic beauty, thereby providing a distinctive viewpoint on the profound emotions and romantic ideals that have been deeply valued within the cultural framework of Saurashtra. The stories namely *A Maiden Love*, *Ghastly Waived a Ghost*, *On The Bank of Shetrunji* and others within *A Ruby Shattered* serves as a testament to the sustained potency of oral traditions in safeguarding and disseminating the cultural wisdom. The folk balladry form brings to life stories of love and devotion set against the diverse landscapes of Kathiawar and Saurashtra through its rhythmic and melodic qualities. The chapter delves into the spaces present in these stories, thereby facilitating a more pertinent comprehension of the intricate interplay between social categories of caste, their emotional expressions, cultural geography and the connections that exist between love stories and the physical spaces they occupy.

Jhaverchand Meghani’s emphasis on oral traditions, particularly the role of charans, serves as a crucial focal point in *A Ruby Shattered*, illustrating a deep engagement with the historical and cultural dynamics of Saurashtra. The charans, as specialist poet-historians, wielded significant influence within the indigenous courts of Saurashtra, contributing to the region’s unique socio-cultural fabric. However, this role faced resistance from the colonial state, which adhered to its own notions of governance

and history writing. The region's association with pastoralist-warrior traditions, culturally closer to Rajasthan than mainland Gujarat, marked its distinct character, deeply rooted in the martial ethos of its diverse kingdoms and chiefdoms. The colonial intervention, particularly by the East India company, aimed at subduing the power of rulers, resulting in the curbing of the Charans' influence. The colonial strategy in western India, especially in Saurashtra, sought to render the charans' position redundant.

Meghani's approach reflects a sensitive negotiation between preservation and adaptation, acknowledging the need to protect the essence of charans' traditions while conforming to the prevailing norms of acceptability. This nuanced reconstitution can be seen as a form of cultural translation, where he mediates between the charans' original narratives and the colonial-era sensitivities, contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage while navigating the challenges posed by external forces. In essence, Meghani's engagement with the charans' oral traditions emerges as a strategic and conscientious effort to safeguard their cultural legacy within the evolving socio-political landscape of colonial-era Saurashtra.

## 5.2 Analysis

The narrative "A Maiden Love" encapsulates the poignant tale of Vijanand and Sheni, woven intricately within the tapestry of forsakenness, yearning and sacrifice. Vijanand, the central protagonist in the narrative is depicted as an orphaned boy navigating the rugged highlands of Geer, embodying resilience in the face of isolation and neglect. His survival among nomadic herdsmen shapes his character, fostering self-reliance and a deep connection with nature. The creation of a jantar from dried melons and bamboo showcases his innate artistic prowess and resourcefulness, that elevates his destitute existence into a realm of musical mastery, where the jantar becomes a transformative force, creating a thirdspace for emotional expression and catharsis.

*Jantar made of huge melons;*

*Thirty-two were its frets;*

*Strummed by Vijanand's fingers,*

*Thirty-six melodies it played.*

*(The play-chord with large melons at each end had thirty-two frets along its scale and a mere touch of Vijanand's fingertips could evoke any of all the thirty-six melodies that filled the air with lively and joyous vibrations.)*

*"When Bhaanchaliyaa took up his jantar,*

*Late after midnight,*

*(I felt as if) Having sailed me into the high seas,*

*Vijanand slashed the sail."*

*("Vijanand, a charan of Bhanchaliya clan, took up his play-chord and played it into the heart of the night. I was so captivated by the music that I felt I was at his total mercy, as though he had taken me on a sea-voyage and then, in the middle of the ocean, ripped off all the sails.")*

*"Prattles oozes from his frets,*

*Love brims from his chords;*

*My heart echoes the lore,*

*Ringling from Vijanand's melons."*

*("The frets of the jantar hummed as though they were holding secret parleys with me. All the nine chords united to produce melodious music of love and romance that has pierced my heart. And the notes erupting from the melons evoked echoes of surging emotions within.")*

While grazing buffaloes near the village of Goraviyali, he encounters a pair of women drawing water from a well, who overturns her pail in panic, "Sister, water him if you want. I am dying of fright merely by looking at his hideous face!" exemplifying how social biases, prejudices and power structures shape perceived space within the narrative, as it involves the subjective interpretation and understanding of the physical and social

environment by the characters in the story. Listening to this, he retorts, “Woman, in her eyes, I, a human being, am more hideous than this crow! Your friend would rather let a crow sully her water than offer me a palmful of water to wet my parched throat! But I suppose that’s how life is.” His journey takes a significant turn when he visits Veda’s shack and captivates the whole town with his melodies. Later, when he was served the meal by his daughter, he recognizes her as the one who had called him hideous-faced at the well. But as the narrative progresses, Sheni, introduced as the daughter of the herdsman Veda, undergoes a profound transformation. Initially repulsed by his appearance at the well, she gradually finds herself attracted towards him through the transcendent melodies of his jantar.

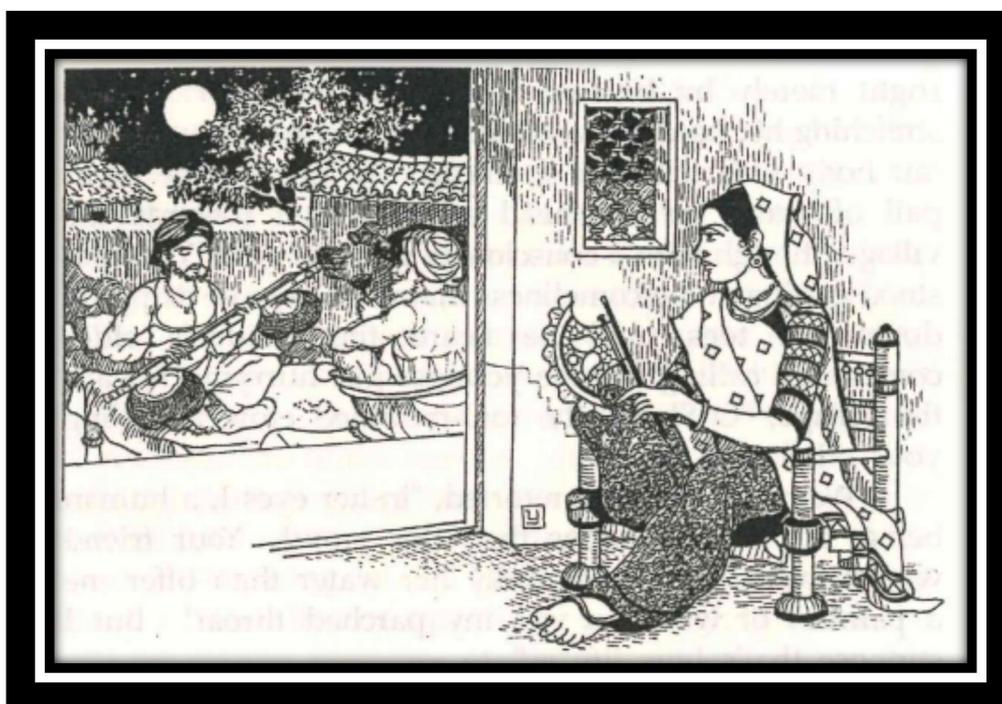


Fig.34 Vijanand Playing his Jantar

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

Veda emerges as a prominent figure in the narrative, as he offers Vijanand a challenge, when he was asked to give Sheni’s hand to him for marriage, stating “Ruddy shepherd urchin! Don’t presume even for a moment that I shall let you walk away with my rarest daughter, just like that! If you want to marry her, go and bring me one hundred and one buffaloes, each of them with nine white blazes on the body. On each of the all four hooves, on the tassel of the tail, on one of the four udders, on the forehead, on the

snout and above one of the eyes. If you cannot make it on this day one year hence, if you are delayed by even a day, forget Sheni for good. If you can make it within a year and halter one hundred and one nine-blazed buffaloes in my barn, wed her on the very day and take her with you. Do you accept?" This task sets in motion his quest, leading him to traverse diverse locations, performing and seeking support, thereby revealing determination, commitment and a willingness to overcome social conventions for his love. His emotional depth is evident in his dreamy moments with Sheni, portraying a complex blend of vulnerability and fortitude. The following duha in the narrative depicts the immense pain felt by Sheni at the moment of his departure.

*Mounted on a steer;*

*Vijanand rode away;*

*"Ganesh! Hinder Vijanand from his left,*

*And make him turn back."*

*("Vijanand has embarked on his mission riding a steer," yearning Sheni pleaded with the twittering partridge of the forest. "O bird, please intercept from his left so that seeing it as a bad omen, Vijanand would abandon his journey and turn back.")*

*"O deer, I shall have you laced,*

*With jingle-bells round your neck;*

*Your horns I shall gild with gold,*

*Please turn my Vijanand back."*

*("O forest deer, intercept from his left and create a bad omen so that he would turn back. I promise to lace your neck with a chaplet of jingling bells and I shall get your horns gilded with gold.")*

On the other hand, Sheni emerges as a symbol of forbidden love and sacrifice. Even amidst her father's reluctance and opposition of the society that stands as formidable barriers, she expresses her affirmative decision stating "Father, whether he

returns or not would not now make a difference because the deadline has passed. I shall unite with him either in the lap of the Himalayas or in my life to come. Please don't stand in my way." Her journey to the mountains becomes a compelling exploration of her inner strength in the face of adversity. Her decision to choose self-imposed exile underscores her willingness to defy traditional norms for the sake of Vijanand. Embarking on a pilgrimage and ascetic quest through sacred shrines, her character is imbued with a spiritual dimension, adding layers of complexity to her persona that portray the trials inherent in the pursuit of love and individuality, even amidst the profound facets of their intertwined destinies. The narrative introduces the Himalayas as a symbolic setting, representing both the pinnacle of religious elevation and the desolate arena where she seeks solace.

*"Ripe is the crop, grains spilling from the cob;*

*My heart is perched on a high nest of hope.*

*Come back at the earliest, o Vijanand mine,*

*For savage men are out to ravage my hopes."*

*("O Vijanand, just like the ripened harvest, my body and soul are ripe for union with you. Like grains bursting out of a matured cob, my youthfulness is at its peak and has begun to spill over. Like a bird perched on a high nest and searching the horizon at twilight for its mate returning to the nest, my entire being is longing and yearning for you. Please come back soon, Vijanand, because like savages, childish charan men aspiring for my hand have begun to devastate my dreams.")*

*"Ripe is the crop, grains turning brilliant gold;*

*My heart is perched on a high nest of hope;*

*Abandoned I feel in the middle of the ocean,*

*O my soul, let us retreat into the Himalayas."*

*“I am like a crop ripe for harvesting. Golden grains on cobs wait to be roasted and relished. Like a bird perched on a high nest scanning the horizon for a water reservoir, my heart is hopefully pining for Vijanand. However, it seems Vijanand has taken me to the high seas and then deserted me. Therefore, o soul, let us go to the Himalayas and dissolve this body.”)*

*The year renewed, the clouds returned,*

*The earth turned green;*

*But Sheni withered away*

*Because Vijanand did not return.*

*(The year ended. The clouds showed up again. Elated by the reunion of the elements, the earth draped itself in the youthful green and smiled out in glee. But alas! While everyone and everything rejoiced, Sheni withered away, all a grief, all aflame, for she could not unite with her dear Vijanand.)*

*“O river, rise over the bluff, swell the knoll,*

*Flood the Gundali ridge!*

*O Ojhat, surge as high as you can*

*And send my Vijanand home!”*

*“O sister Ojhat, you are able to rise over the bluffs and inundate the ridges. From that elevation, you may be able to sight Vijanand though far away he will be. Please surge and soar high into the sky so that Vijanand will be able to see you and guided homeward.”)*

*“Wedding garland meant for Vijanand,*

*None else I shall lace;*

*Four lacs are charan men,  
As my brothers I regard them all.”*

*“Folks, why advise me now?  
Each blaring a different horn!  
If that full of wisdom you are,  
Why did you let him go?”*

*(“My kinsfolk, aren't you ashamed of singing a different tune now? If you thought yourselves wise, why didn't you intervene and stop him when he was leaving?”)*

*“Those donning laundered robes  
Do not captivate my heart;  
Let him be uncouth, unclean;  
Vijanand is my chosen man.”*

*(“I don't choose a man just because he wears brightly laundered clothes. Vijanand is dearest to me, no matter how untidy and clumsy he looks.”)*

*And,*

*“Rancid butter smirched by goats,  
I shall never eat;  
Relish I'll pure buffalo ghee,  
Skimmed by my love, Vijanand.”*

*“O counsellors, I cannot eat the butter sullied by goats. I shall relish the pure ghee boiled from the butter of buffaloes’ milk, the curds of which are churned by Vijanand; i.e. I cannot accept the lustful proposals made by some of the charan men.”*)

*Pitching a tent along the way,*

*Donning a prioress’s saffron robe,*

*Searching I am many a land,*

*Please show me my Vijanand’s trail.”*

*“I have donned a saffron robe of a recluse, and being tired have pitched a tent on the roadside to continue my search for Vijanand by asking the passers-by of his whereabouts.”*)

"O brothers!

*“A youth with a jantar in his hand,*

*Might have lost his way in Bhal;*

*Chanting his name I follow his tracks;*

*Does anyone know his trail?”*

And they said:

*“Bright was his wimple;*

*Swarthy saffron glowed his skin;*

*Strode past these shops*

*The youth with a jantar in hand.”*

*(“A bright red sash was wrapped around his head. His complexion was on the darker side. We saw him just the other day. A youth he was with a jantar in his hand, walking past these very shops only yesterday.”)*

*“By walking, the delay hurts me;*

*By running I am dying of shame;*

*Into Vagad Vijanand has crossed;*

*Let me halt and raise an ensign.”*

*(“If I walk, the distance between him and me is increasing by the moment. A running woman looks immodest, and therefore I feel terribly embarrassed to run. Vijanand seems to have crossed into Vagad region, far away. Now I pause frequently and hoist my sash atop my staff hoping that he may sight and recognize it. He may then stop and wait for me.)*

*In the frosty Himalayas, bones of Sheni,*

*Consumed they were not though yearning to be;*

*She then shaped an idol from the sedge*

*And a wedding she performed on the spot.*

The climax unfolds as Vijanand, delayed by a day, returns to Goraviyali having successfully fulfilled Veda’s challenge. He hurries towards the mountains as soon as he gets the news of her retreat. However, Sheni, paralyzed atop the Himalayas seeks dissolution, choosing not to return. The narrative concludes with a heart-wrenching scene of Vijanand playing the jantar, while she chants “Ra..am!... Ra..am!... Ra..am!...” from afar. The tragic aspect of unfulfilled love prevails as Vijanand’s wails echo through the frozen sky.

*“My frostbitten bones are numbed knee-high;*

*Vijanand, go back; o precious one, turn back.”*

*(“O my very precious Vijanand, my limbs are frozen to the core, dead they are forever. I cannot go back. Therefore, dearest one, please turn back and go home alone.”)*

*“Barren I would remain,*

*With none to ignite my pyre;*

*Life to come 'd be damned,*

*This one's already ruined.”*

*(“My body is so disabled that our union cannot be consummated. This life is already wasted away, but without a son to ignite my pyre after I die, my next life too shall be ruined.”)*

*“Half my body is dead,*

*The other half is benumbed;*

*Waste not your words,*

*O Vijanand, please go home.”*

*(O Vijanand, most of my body is already paralyzed. Do not waste your effort. Please go back.”)*

*“Vijanand, play your jantar to me,*

*Make the Himalaya resound;*

*Fishermen stand spellbound;*

*Surfacing fish flocking all around.*

*Jantar crashed and cracked,*

*The premier chord was snapped;*

*Died Sheni, the daughter of Veda,*

*Lived the singer, not the song.*

*(Jantar crashed and cracked. Its main string snapped and broke. Veda's daughter Sheni breathed her last and the player of the jantar could not play it ever again.)*

*When hungry, he chewed on crumbs;*

*The wretched man thus bided his time.*

*Having left a mate like Sheni behind,*

*Vijanand returned to the mortal world.*

*(Leaving behind a mate virtuous as Sheni in the Himalayas, Vijanand returned home empty-handed and empty-hearted and, like a miserable tramp, survived on alms.)*

Oralities permeate the narrative through dialogues, songs and chants, adding a layer of cultural richness. The duha recited by Sheni and the conversations among the characters contribute to the oral tradition, emphasizing the importance of language and communication in shaping the narrative space. The settings described in the narrative contribute to the creation of real spaces, each playing a crucial role in shaping the characters and events. The swamps of the Geer sanctuary serve as the stage for Vijanand's encounter with a vine and the creation of his jantar, marking the genesis of his musical prowess. The barren icy peaks with sleet laden glens and the frozen lakes depicts Sheni's secluded pursuit of love, embodying the harsh challenges she endures. The Ojhat and the Vaitarani riverbanks represent an imagined space, intricately connecting the characters' emotions with the geographical locations. These locations symbolize the envisioned future of building a home and a shack, portraying the idyllic aspirations and dreams associated with the natural surroundings. Furthermore, these milieus become the backdrop for Veda's challenge to Vijanand, introducing a temporal dimension marked by the passage of a year in the narrative. The story encapsulates a rich tapestry of themes,

including forbidden love and sacrifice, weaving together a profound examination of human emotions and societal expectations.

The narrative “Ghastly Wailed the Ghost” resonates with the haunting tale of Mangada Wala, capturing the eerie and unsettling nature of his afterlife marked by the groans and tormented cries echoing through the Geer forest, as he grapples with unfulfilled desires and the pain of an unrequited love with Padmavati. The heightened emotional expression conveyed through the term ‘wailed’ accentuates the poignant lamentation embedded in his existence, haunted by the tragic circumstances of his premature demise on the battlefield and his deep desires of reuniting with his beloved in the form of ghost, reinforcing the spectral presence central to the narrative. The title not only serves as an evocative descriptor of the story’s essence but also alludes to the existential agony that permeates the tale, capturing the intricacies of love, tragedy and redemption in a transcendent and otherworldly realm.



Fig.35 Ghost of Mangada Wala yearning to meet Padmavati

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

Mangada Wala, a princely figure hailing from Dhantarwad, held a position of esteem in the societal hierarchy, embodying the stature of a Kshatriya. His tragic death pierced by an enemy's spear during a fray, marks a turning point in his character arc, propelling him into an ethereal domain. In the rustic backdrop of the Geer forest, nomadic herdsmen gather in shanties with their clay pipes glowing like eerie fires. The narrative commences with herdsmen exchanging tales about a recent miracle, where an opium-addicted charan finds himself bestowed with an unexpected gift from Mangada Wala, facilitated by a mysterious youth adorned in white attire. The recipient recounts how he collapsed on the ridge of his mount, only to be revived by a lightning dose of elixir sent by the headman of Kantala village. The headman, however, denies any knowledge of the act, raising questions about the lingering presence of his spirit and the possibility of spooky intervention.

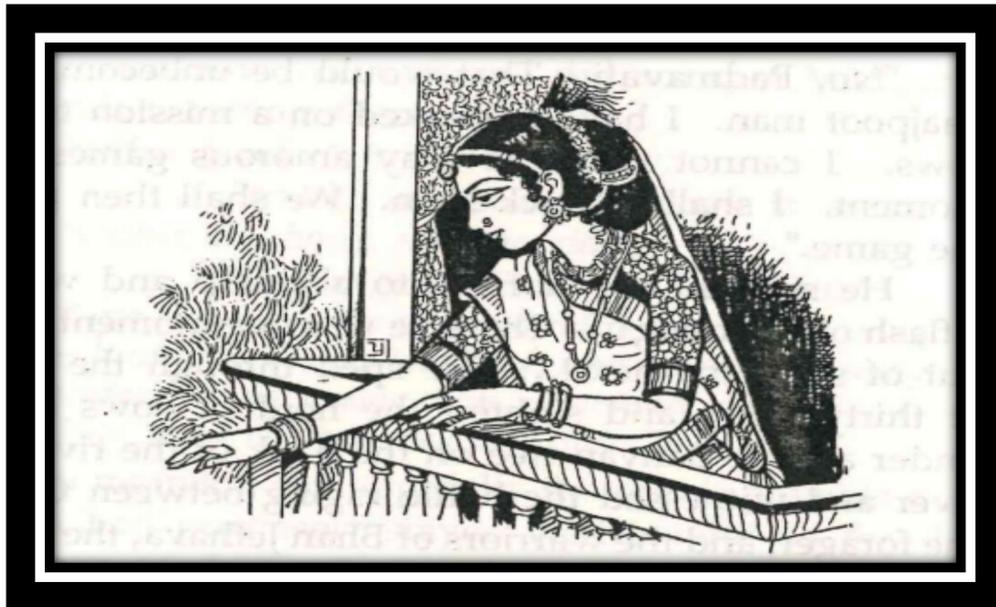


Fig. 36 Padmavati witnessing the ghost of her beau Mangada Wala

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

A competent storyteller in the herdsman's midst weaves a duha-studded narrative, recounting his ill-fated pursuit of cattle thieves and his tragic separation from Padmavati, the daughter of the mayor of Patan, embodying the societal stature of a prominent family aligning with Vaniya community. Her enduring connection to Mangada's unearthly figure, as depicted in her nightly search and fervent yearning, adds depth to her character,

portraying a woman bound by social restrictions yet grappling with mystical influences that shape her destiny.

*Elegant horse in rein, curls sweeping his face,*

*Fully armoured, his weapons all shiny and sharp,*

*Raring he is, to charge into the enemy hordes,*

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

*(Riding a quality horse, endowed with youthful zest and vitality, protected by steely 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 horse all equine,*

*The rider faultlessly fine;*

*Mangada's lance gauging the sky;*

*So beheld her eyes.*

*(Padmavati, the daughter of the headman of Ghoomali town, sitting in her balcony saw her beau, Mangada Wala. The horse was well-groomed; equally worthy was the rider with a lance in his hand that probed the sky. The daughter of a vaniya father saw the kshatriya beau whom she had already surrendered her heart and soul. Their eyes met.)*

*“Vaniya traders we are,*

*While you hail from a ruling clan;*

*Yet, bonds of life pristine,*

*Made us unite, o Mangada!”*

*(“O Mangada, my master, we hail from diverse communities but in our lives gone by we must have belonged to each other because our love has overcome the caste differences and drawn us together in this life too.”)*

Therefore,

*“Here, in the chamber upstairs,*

*Set is a chopat board;*

*Throw your brassy dice,*

*To checkmate me, o Mangada!”*

*(“O betrothed one, in my chamber here upstairs, the game of chopat is all set and golden dice are lying in wait. All these days I have been playing the game all by myself, imagining you to be sitting across and throwing the dice on your behalf, too. Therefore, pray come upstairs at least once and make your moves. Only then our union will be regarded as solemnized.”)*

*“Go back when still alive,*

*Not yet your age to fray.*

*Your ma would dirge your death,*

*O you alien guest!”*

*(“O young man!” said the bandit to Mangada. “You are only a visitor to the town. You are not yet of age to plunge into battles. If you are slain, your mother would wail her heart out. Hence go back while you are alive.”)*

But

*Steadfast he stood,*

*Against the whooping hallooing horde;*

*Mangada drew his sword,*

*And dashed for 'd to ravage the foe.*

*(Chadava and his men let out blood-curdling battlecries but intrepid Mangada stood his ground, drew his sword and charged to join the melee.)*

*Half a hundred turbans she saw;*

*But the twined one nowhere in sight;*

*Neither the horse nor the rider;*

*“O Mangada, Thee I do not behold.”*

*(“I can see all the fifty turbaned riders who are returning from the battlefield, but my loved one, who wears an elegantly rolled headgear, is not among them. That horse and that rider would have stood out had they been there.”)*

*Ambled the spinning horse,*

*Saddled he was in gold;*

*“Mangada I can't behold;*

*The ace not riding the bay.”*

*(A lone horse wearing a golden harness was just then sighted trotting in aimlessly on unsteady hooves at the rear of the cavalry, but the singular rider was not in the saddle. It then seemed certain to her that Mangada was slain on the battlefield.)*

*“Your beau, o Padmavati,*

*Rested on the Hiran’s bank;*

*Convey her many farewells,’*

*So said dying Mangada.”*

*(“O virtuous Padmavati, your loved one had to stay back for good on the bank of the river Hiran. From his deathbed he has conveyed to you his million farewells.”)*

*“The man who would have gilded*

*A Banyan tree when he wed,*

*Mangada of Jethani clan,*

*Slain by Chadava in an alien land.”*

*and*

*“Fetch him seven shrouds,*

*From the maternal uncle’s home;*

*Wail you not, o Padmavati,*

*While standing on the riverbank.”*

*(Mangada’s body was covered by seven shrouds brought consigned by his maternal uncle’s family. The body was then consigned to fire. Everyone tried to calm and console Padmavati, who stood wailing and weeping on the bank of the river while the body of Mangada was consumed by the crematory pyre.)*

*“Drops of crimson blood*

*Spattered me at an infant's age;*

*For condemned I am to ever wail*

*And never to sight my Mangada."*

*("I must have been smeared with blood when I was born. That was the omen of death! What an unfortunate woman I am, to be condemned to spend the rest of my life wailing and weeping for Mangada, whom I shall never see again.")*

As the narrative unfolds, his spirit lingers in the occult, unable to find peace. One day, under a haunted Banyan tree, he encounters Arasi Wala, a raajpoot guard, who is moved by his agonizing cries. He implores Arasi to help him attain salvation by extracting a metal fragment embedded in his breastbone and immersing his remains in Dama Kund. This sets in motion a series of events leading to a truce between outlaws Jesa, Veja and the emperor, highlighting the facets of loyalty and reconciliation.

*"When the mortals weep,*

*Tears brim their eyes;*

*When ghastly wails a ghost,*

*Blood drips down his eyes."*

*("O raajpoot, when human beings cry, salty tears flow out of their eyes, but mine is a wail of horror let out by a spirit unfulfilled; blood oozes into my eyes from my bleeding heart and then down it drips. How acute is the anguish of a spirit unfulfilled! Oh! What an excruciating agony!")*

*"You were like my father, I was like your son!*

*Why can't you recognize me, o Wala Arasi?*

*Ill-deeds of mine during the lives pristine,*

*Have caught up with me in this life time.”*

*(“O uncle Arasi, I was the son of your blood-brother Jetha Wala and therefore to me you are like my father. And you cannot even recognize me! My present ill-fate is the penalty I am paying for the sins I committed during my earlier lives. During my last life in this mortal world I had formed bonds of love that I was unable to break before death.”)*

*“The innermost of my heart,*

*To whom shall I reveal?*

*Impaled dead at the Banyan grove,*

*Wed I couldn't Padmavati.”*

*(“O uncle, whom shall I tell my woes? At this site near the Banyan grove, I was lanced dead by a spear before I could marry Padmavati.”)*

*“Crammed here are us ghosts,*

*Longing to break out of the Geers;*

*All aflame are our spectral forms*

*That only Arasi can extinguish.”*

*(“All the spectres crammed in this eerie hive of ghosts are longing to break out of the swamps of the Geers. Each one of us is burning with fires of unfulfilled desires that only you can help put out.”)*

*“Has the fount fully dried up*

*That the loved ones too disown me?*

*Lashed by a bad tempest,*

*O Arasi, the stream seems all deplete!”*

*(“O kinsman, what has made the spring of your affection dry up? Poisonous winds must have blasted with a force that has evaporated the love and driven it to unfathomable depths!”)*

*“Yearns the soul, with no solace,*

*That Wala should be the groom;*

*O Arasi, true I died,*

*But my heart and soul cling to Padmavati.”*

*(“Arasi, the sight of this wedding party tears my heart. I am dead but my heart and soul are where Padmavati is.”)*

*“Bliss that was to be,*

*I left behind in Patan with Padmavati;*

*O Arasi, I languish,*

*In this wilderness teeming with ghosts.”*

*(“O kinsman, I left all my dreams of happiness behind at Patan with Padmavati. Now I am condemned to rot and writhe in this weird world of spirits. I am afire. Let me marry her, please.”)*

*“Ablaze are the skies above,*

*Earth aflame beneath my feet;*

*Hurry to extinguish this inferno,*

*O squire of Dhantarwad.”*

*(Padmavati, the anointed bride, sat weeping in her chamber on the upper storey of her house. O Mangada, o overlord of Dhantarwad town, I am about to be married to another man. Unable to open my heart to anyone, I am being made to give myself away to a second man in one lifespan. My world is aflame. The skies are belching fire on me. The earth is rankling beneath my feet. Therefore, o master mine, please come quickly to put out the flames of this inferno that my world has turned into.”)*

*“O Banyan tree!*

*Every leaf ignited by your burning sighs;*

*Seared I am by the spectral flames;*

*Tell me how to quell.”*

*(O Banyan tree, fumes rising from your anguished sighs have ignited your every leaf. The inferno of unfulfilled desires is raging and singeing me from all around. Where shall I go to quell the flame that has caused the fire?”)*

*“Branch to branch I leap and find*

*Misery inscribed on every leaf;*

*Mangada's demise has robbed me of bliss,*

*Even in my dreams.”*

*(The futile frenetic search meant enduring the searing flames. The unsatiated desires of her dead beau had turned into flares that were igniting and setting the entire grove ablaze.)*

Orality, an essential aspect of storytelling, is evident in the communal tales exchanged by herdsmen and the duha-studded narrative woven by the storyteller. These

poetic verses describing Mangada's horse and the exchanges between characters add an oral dimension, emphasizing the cultural richness embedded in spoken traditions. The climax unfolds in the court of the emperor, where the outlaws, who have been guarding the emperor, are called to share opium. His unexpected generosity signifies a potential resolution to the age-old feud, showcasing the metaphysical's power to mend broken ties. The story concludes with a sense of closure as Mangada's spirit finds solace, signifying the cyclical nature of phantasmal forces and redemption. Richard Schechner's concept of performance can be observed in the ritualistic elements, such as the quest for Mangada's bones and the immersion in Dama Kund, symbolizing a journey towards salvation. These thematic elements collectively contribute to the fabric of complexity, offering a profound exploration of the supernatural, human emotions and the interplay between love, tragedy and afterlife in the forest.

The physical spaces are represented within the Geer forest, a symbolic and atmospheric backdrop that serves as the locus for the spectral experiences of Mangada Wala. Notable locations within the forest include the shanties, creating an ambiance of communal storytelling. The Jholapari River becomes a pivotal point in the narrative, marking the boundary between villages and symbolizing transitions between realms. The ridge of the mount and Kantala village, especially the home of the headman, becomes a center for inexplicable events, such as the mysterious opium delivery, adding layers of intrigue to the tale. The haunted Banyan tree, near which Padmavati mourns and searches for Mangada's spirit, signifies the intersection of the living and the spectral. These locations serve as the lived space where characters directly experience their intertwining destinies. Imagined space is depicted through Padmavati's yearning, creating an emotional connection within the physical realms, making them significant in the characters' internal worlds. These settings contribute to the narrative's atmospheric richness, providing a nuanced backdrop for the supernatural occurrences, emotional conflicts and thematic complexities that unfold throughout the story.

The narrative "On the Bank of the Shetrunji" encapsulates the essence of the story within the geographical and emotional landscape it unfolds. The Shetrunji River serves as a symbolic backdrop, mirroring the constant flow and changes in the lives of the characters. The author intricately weaves the narrative around the vibrant riverside, depicting its evergreen beauty and serene ambiance, akin to the facade maintained by the

characters in the face of societal norms. The Shetrunji becomes a witness to the playful courtship of Devara and Anal-de, their separation, and the subsequent emotional turbulence that ensues. It stands as a metaphor for the flow of time, capturing the transient nature of human relationships. The use of the river as a central motif not only serves as a scenic backdrop but also amplifies the emotional undercurrents of the characters' lives, reflecting imagined space in the narrative. Thus, the title not only signifies the physical setting but also embodies the emotional, societal and philosophical currents, making it an integral choice for this evocative tale.

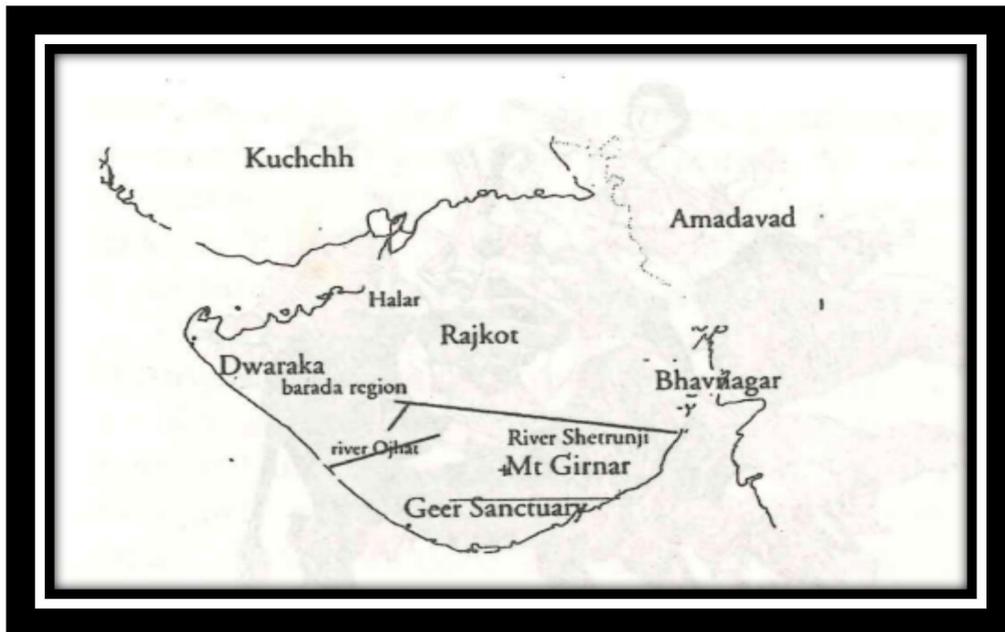


Fig. 37 The location of Bank of the Shetrunji river where the tale unfolded

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

The narrative follows the lives of Anal-de, Devara, and Dholara, emblematic of the Ahir inhabitants. The riverside hamlet exudes serenity, with knee-high grass and contented buffaloes grazing on both banks. The author employs rich imagery to depict the daily rhythms of life from the lusty metallic choruses of buffalo milking, to the metrical swish of churners skimming butter depicting lived space in the narrative. The playful camaraderie of two youngsters, Devara and Anal-de, in the picturesque hamlet explores the theme of innocence and youthful love. Characterized by his grit and resilience, Devara's physicality is marked by a rugged exterior, reflective of the challenging agrarian life along the river. His symbolic representation as the protector of Anal-de, unveils layers

of emotional depth as he grapples with the constraints imposed by society. His determined pursuit of love and union with her becomes a metaphor for the clash between personal desires and entrenched cultural values.

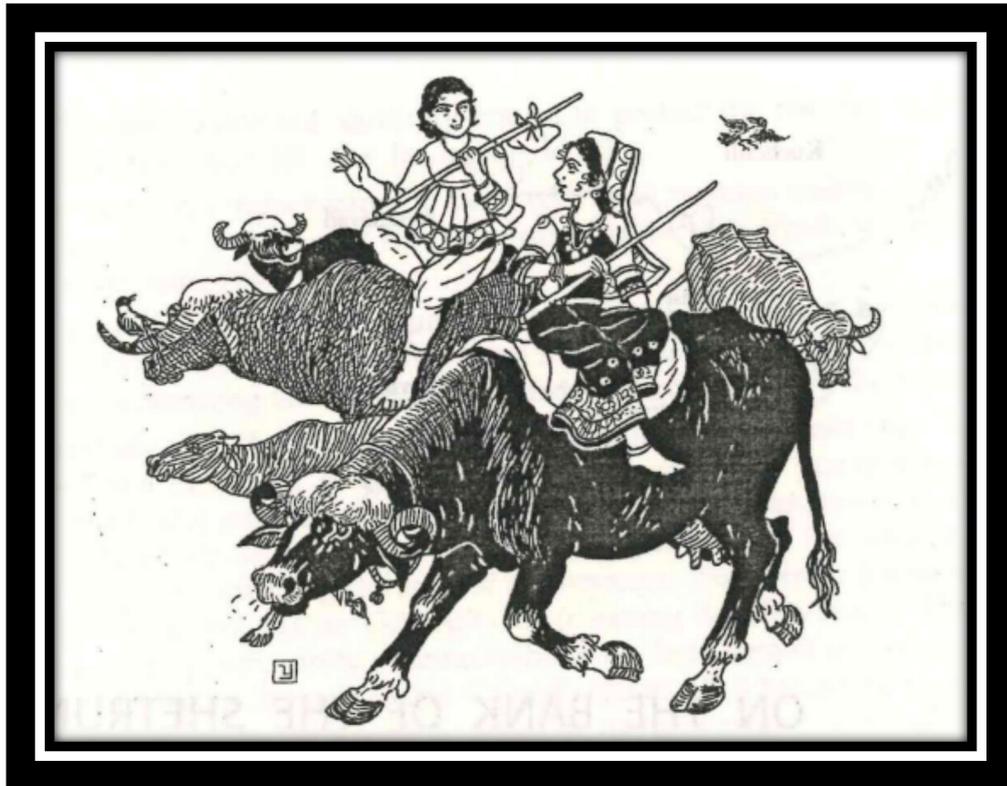


Fig. 38 Anal and Devara being engaged in a playful camaraderie and riding buffaloes

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

Their bond, rooted in childhood friendship, transforms as Anal-de blossoms into womanhood, her plainness giving way to graceful contours. However, familial expectations threaten their connection, as her mother vehemently opposes the idea of her daughter marrying Devara, citing concerns about a life of drudgery and potential poverty, “She is my only daughter; precious as a rare gem she is! I won’t let her be led away like a donkey to a lifelong drudgery of nursing that crippled beady! All her childhood my girl has basked in the luxury of the best of everything - food, clothings and what not. Now, how can I banish her to a pauper’s shack and let her wear patched rags the rest of her life?” Her character is intricately woven into the fabric of the narrative, symbolizing the struggle for autonomy within a cultural milieu that often subjugates individual agency.

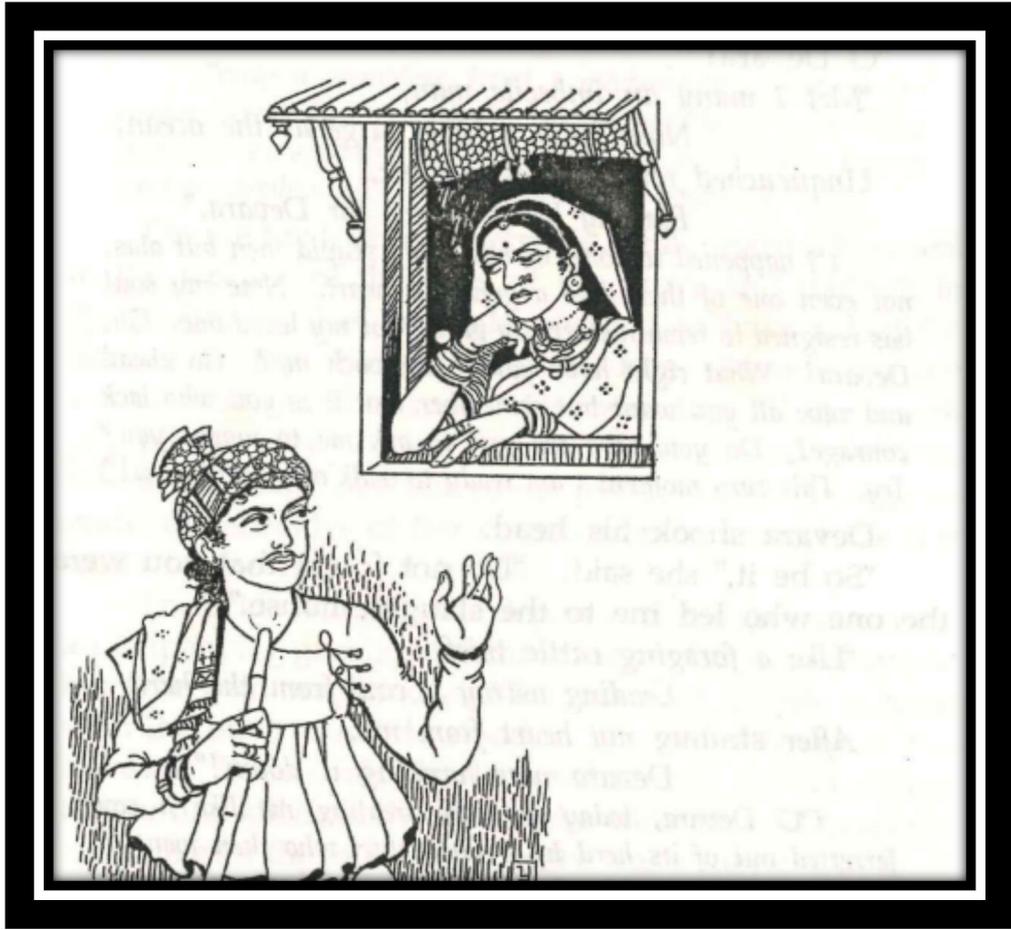


Fig. 39 Anal De's heart crying out due to her separation with Devara

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

*“Handsome men all around*

*Do not captivate my heart;*

*Devara, be a dandy groom,*

*And lark in the pavilion mine!”*

*(“O Devara, while it is true that many of these Ahir men present here are handsome and attractive to look at, their childish flamboyance does not appeal to me. Why are you not next to me, revelling under this ceremonial shade today as my buoyant groom?”)*

*“O Devara!*

*“Met I many an imbecile man,  
None with a heart large as the ocean;  
Unquenched remains desire mine,  
For my heart yearns for Devara.”*

*(“I happened to come across many stupid men but alas, not even one of them had a generous heart. Now my soul has resigned to remain eternally pining for my loved one. Oh, Devara! What right have you to reproach me? Go ahead and rave all you want but remember that it is you who lack courage! Do you have the grit to ask me to marry you? Try. This very moment I am ready to walk away with you!”)*

*“Like a foraging cattle thief,  
Leading astray a cow from the herd,  
After stealing my heart from me,  
Devara now handing it down!”*

*(“O Devara, today you are treating me like a cow fettered out of its herd by a cattle-thief who then went on to undersell the neighing braying cattle at a throw-away price. You are just handing me over, even as I whine and wail, to a total stranger.”)*

*“Four times I circled the fire,  
Although with a fluttering heart;  
How to relish the sweet,  
When in misery mires my Devara?”*

*(“With a trembling heart I mechanically followed the groom to circle four times the Sacred Fire; now he is ceremonially offering me a spoonful of sweets, but how can I relish it from a stranger while my Devara is writhing in agony?”)*

*“Farewell, o loved one;*

*May you revel in rarest bliss;*

*Foul turned Devara's dice*

*By the karma of his own.”*

*(“By all means go and reap the joy that comes one's way only once during one's lifetime. As a result of my misdeeds, my dices have fallen foul.”)*

*“Devara, do not laugh!*

*Laugh you not, o Devara;*

*Your enemies may notice;*

*They may jest or scorn;*

*Either way will mar our fate.”*

*(“If your enemies see you laughing, they would ridicule you or scorn you. It would make you more miserable. Everything would turn more difficult for both of us.”)*

*“So long, Devara!*

*With a sack of herbs on the shoulder,*

*Like a healer, o my love,*

*Visit my new abode when you can,*

*Roaming around the world.”*

*(“Someday, while roaming the world as a healer with a sack of herbal remedies on your shoulder, do visit my new homeland in to diagnose my affliction.”)*

*“Send me a word in advance,*

*O dearest mine, to send out sedans;*

*Swoop down upon us,*

*Swift as a cloud-laden Ashadhi whirlwind.”*

*(“O my heart and soul, if you let me know in advance, I shall arrange a litter to meet you on the outskirts. O cherished one, like the rainy month of Ashadh, come like a thundering raincloud and drench me with your love.”)*

*Cherished one going away to her wedded home;*

*Eyes shedding tears bitter as hemlock;*

*Neighbours swarming the outskirts to bid her farewell;*

*Parents turned into foes, sending her away.*

*Hark! Parents turned into foes;*

*Sorrow in heart she must stow.*

*Says Tamachi Sumara, behold!*

*Cherished one going away to her wedded home;*

*Eyes shedding tears bitter as hemlock;*

*Beloved leaving the town, desolate becomes the lane.*

*“Dear as a brother is the font in the sand;*

*Heartless stomping hurts him.*

*O water, trickle and sparkle fine,*

*From the tack on which stands Devara.”*

*(“This font in the river sand is dear as a brother to me. It could not bear being ruffled by so many hands. None could strain out the sludge from the water. As if that was not enough of manhandling, now the font would have to suffer at my hands! O Destiny, let clear water spring forth from the direction in which my cherished Devara is standing at this moment.”)*

*“This hail and fanfare I cannot bear;*

*Endure I can't the floral frolics;*

*Alas! Faraway is my Devara;*

*On Dholara my heart won't lean.”*

*(“The medley of the welcoming fanfare and the romantic spirit behind the ballgame of floral bunches between the bride and the groom seem out of place to me. My Devara is far away, and my heart refuses to settle on Dholara.”)*

*“Vermilion by the fistfuls,*

*These smears I cannot bear;*

*Heart, like an ember,*

*Sears me with shooting sparks.”*

*(“I detest even the thought of this profusion of vermilion being hurled at me. It ignites the infernal agony of my heart and the erupting sparks of painful emotions sear me.”)*

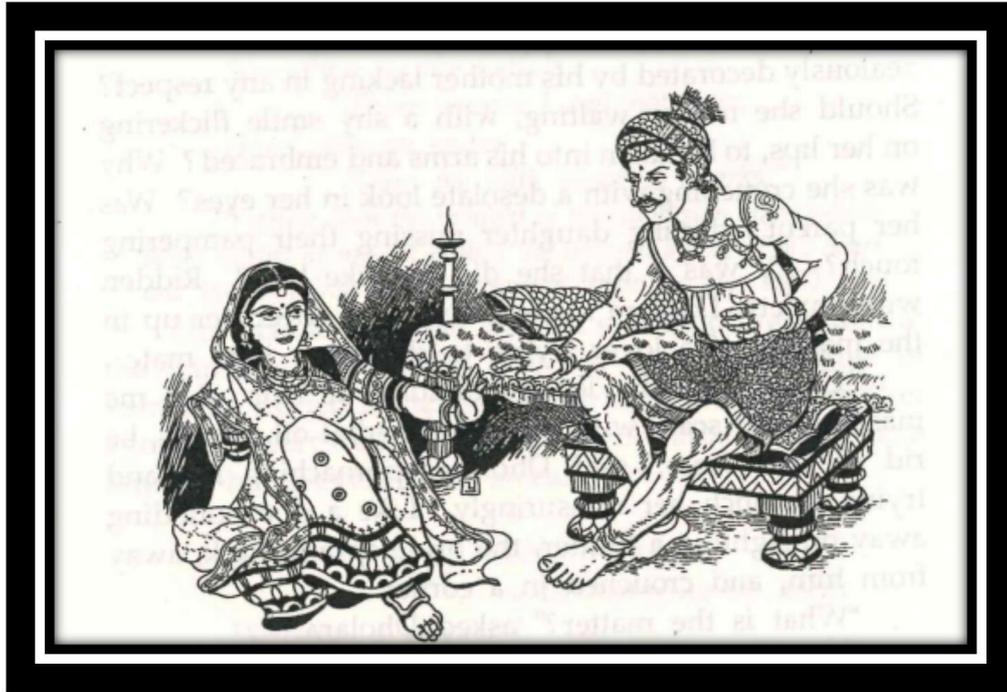


Fig. 40 Anal De informing Dholara to not waste his effort in futility as she can only be in love with Devar and nobody else

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

The episode of Anal-de's marriage to Dholara leads to a series of compromise and sacrifice, as familial obligations supersede one's innate aspirations. The well, where she contemplates her past and future, signifies a nexus between the physical and emotional realms, reflecting the theme of introspection embedded in the spatial dynamics of thirdspace. However, as the narrative unfolds, Dholara's character undergoes a profound transformation, revealing intrinsic profoundness. His subsequent decision to rectify the situation and return Anal-de to her true love demonstrates a surprising moral rectitude, as he says to Devara, "Your heart and your soul. Your better half. Your wife, the one who had pledged herself to you. Not knowing about your mutual attachment, I had purchased her for a price. On the scale of timeworn social taboos even human beings can be bought and sold, but I had not known that there still exist those who could neither be bought nor bartered, Devara! This one that I have brought back to you is one of them." In doing so, he transcends the conventional role of an antagonist, showcasing magnanimity and understanding. His character becomes a vehicle for exploring the dynamics of love and morality, adding layers of depth to the narrative and highlighting the potential for personal growth within the constraints of cultural expectations. Anal-de's eventual

reunion with Devara underscores her resilience and agency, elevating her beyond a mere victim of circumstances to an empowered protagonist sailing through the convoluted currents of life.

*“Over four armlengths is my braid,*

*Woven by a man fine and fair;*

*Only he will unknot the twine,*

*Whose bounty has filled my heart.”*

*(“This hair of mine more than four feet long had been braided with a ribbon by the hands of Devara, a fair one to look at. He had tied a knot of his loyalty on the braid. Only he has a right to untie the knot. O Ahir, another man’s soul has been woven into this braid. That nuptial had been tied long ago. Stay away from me. It is true that in the eyes of the world I am your wife. Accordingly, I shall live in your shack and toil like your slave till I die, but you better forget your hope of even our sashes brushing each other.”)*

*“The first game of chopat we played was*

*With pieces made of gold;*

*The stakes I lost to Devara were*

*My heart and this right hand mine.”*

*(“When Devara and I played our first game of chopat with coins carved out of our golden hearts, he won the game and I lost my heart and my right hand to him.”)*

*“How can I sleep, o dear man?*

*In bed too I find no respite.*

*My eyelids open since eternity*

*Won't close till I see my Devara."*

*("How can I sleep? My eyes, winkless and wide open, would not close until I behold Devara. I shall sleep soundly only after I see him. If I don't see him ever again, I am cursed to sleeplessness forever.")*

*"Though piping hot is the meal,*

*Relish it I cannot;*

*Lest it'd singe my love,*

*Who rests within my heart."*

*("Alas! How can I relish a hot meal? Devara rests inside my entire being and I am afraid his delicate skin would be singed if I eat a hot meal.")*

*"Rope, though forty feet long,*

*Didn't reach water surface;*

*My yearning for the cherished one*

*Took my entire day."*

*("Ma, the rope was forty feet long, long enough to reach the bottom of the well, but for some reason it did not even touch the water surface. My entire day went by in waiting for Devara.")*

*Cherished one going away to her wedded home,*

*Setting up dense thickets enroute:*

*Sleep eludes me, appetite is lost.*

*I can't relish food, whom can I tell the reason why?*

*I continue to live, clinging to the memory of her word.*

*In the very first of the lives together, o queen,*

*You and I made a couple of happy parrot birds,*

*Dear they are, the gentle ones, to our Lord Rama.*

*North of the land, when mangoes were ripe,*

*A kite pecked me dead, o my queen Pingala.....*

*The wicked vulture while took my life,*

*You did not depart with me, o queen Pingala....*

*Think of those days of our life together, long ago,*

*May peace come to your conscience, o Pingala.....*

*In the second of our lives together, o queen,*

*You were a doe and I was a buck deer;*

*Dear are the deer, the gentle ones, to our Lord Rama.*

*In the thick of a forest, I was caught in a poacher's trap;*

*While falling in it, I dropped dead, o queen Pingala.....*

*When the wicked trapper thus took my life,*

*You did not come to my rescue, o queen Pingala.....*

*Think of those days of our life together, long ago,*

*May peace come to your conscience, o Pingala.....*

*(During their following life ages ago, they were born a deer and a doe, meek docile animals patronized by Lord Rama. One day the deer was trapped into a snare rigged by a*

*hunter. When he lay dying, laments Bhartruhari, the doe had run away letting him die all alone.)*

*In the third of our lives together, o queen,*

*You were a brahmin belle, I a devotee of Lord Rama.*

*Dear they are, the gentle ones, to our Lord Rama.*

*While plucking the flowers in the Kundalika forest,*

*Stung I was by a black rattler, o queen Pingala..*

*The depraved reptile took my life,*

*But you did not step nearer me, o queen Pingala.....*

*Think of those days of our life together, long ago,*

*May peace come to your conscience, o Pingala.....*

*(It was in the third life together that the royal couple had lived as a Brahmin devotee and his wife. One day they had gone to the forest to gather flowers for pooja when a rattler had stung the Brahmin dead. And yet, the king lamented, she had not remained with him in his death.)*

*Fourth time now it was that together we lived:*

*You as queen Pingala and I king Bharathari;*

*Four long lives we had lived together*

*Yet, you won't renounce everything as I did, o Pingala.....*

*Think of those days of our life together, long ago,*

*May peace come to your conscience, o Pingala.....*

*(Now, concluding the fourth stanza the king said that in spite of having lived together for four lives, she was unwilling to give up the palace luxuries and accompany him on his journey of renunciation.)*

Orality is subtly depicted through poignant dialogues and verses exchanged by the characters. Anal-de's heartfelt expressions, especially in poetic form, become a medium for conveying intense emotions. The use of verses and dialogues serves as a cultural and oral expression, adding a layer of authenticity, enhancing the narrative's richness. The resolution through Dholara's intervention reshapes Devara's narrative arc. He being overwhelmed with emotions, declares, "Dholara, even if I rip off my skin and stitch it on the soles of your shoes, I cannot repay you for what you have done. Where shall I find an Ahir man more worthy than you to whom I can entrust my sisters?" Dholara, showcasing large heartedness, accepts his two sisters as his brides. This unexpected denouement underscores the author's exploration of the malleability of rigid norms and the capacity for individuals to navigate composite emotional landscapes. In the final act, the story converges on a moment of communal celebration and reconciliation. Propelled by the singing of a recluse couple, the narrative culminates in a series of impromptu weddings.

The narrative unfolds primarily within the idyllic riverside hamlet nestled along the verdant banks of the Shetrunji river depicting multitude of physical spaces in the narrative. The perpetual greenery and the tranquil ambiance of the river serve as symbolic elements mirroring the temporal fluctuations in the characters' lives. Adjacent to the hamlet lies the Geer forest, enveloped in an aura of mystery as the occasional spine-chilling roars of lions emanate from its depths. This geographical feature contributes an element of suspense and intrigue to the narrative, adding layers to the atmospheric tone of the story. The forest's proximity to the hamlet establishes a sense of coexistence between civilization and the untamed wilderness. The narrative further unfolds in the pasture grounds just outside the hamlet, where the two central characters, engage in carefree play during their youthful days. The groves by the pasture become spaces of respite during summer afternoons, where the characters rest under the cool shade of Tamarind trees. In Lefebvre's framework, the geographical and emotional landscapes intricately weave together, creating a symbiotic relationship between settings and incidents, thereby enriching the thematic and symbolic dimensions of the story.

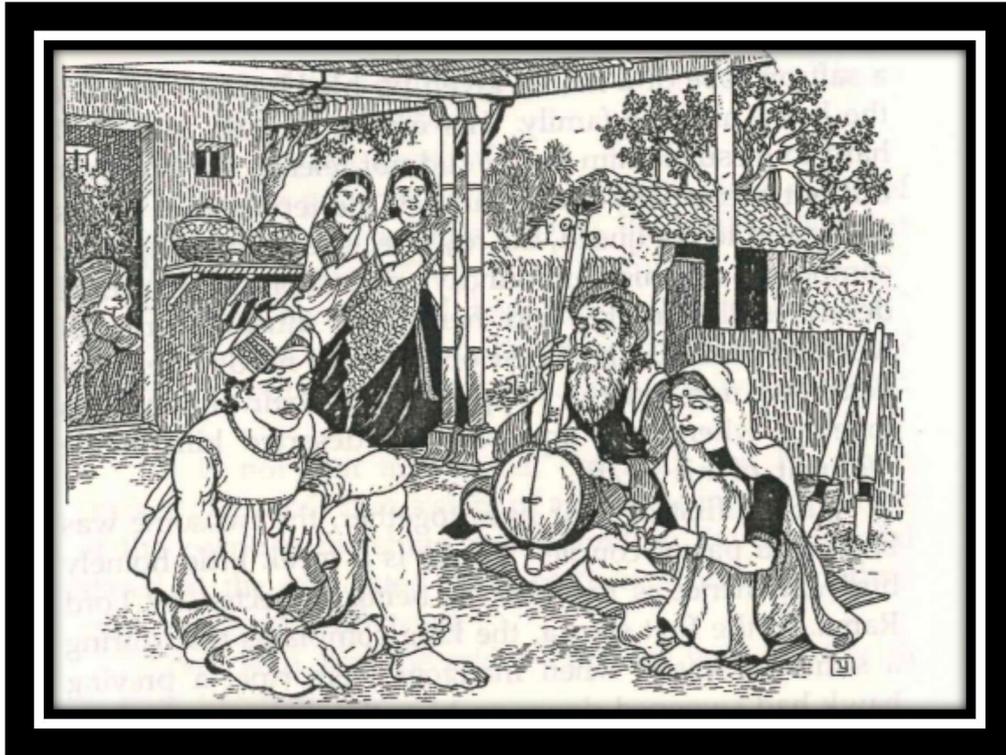


Fig. 41 Anal De being reunited to Devara by Dholara

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

The narrative “Crushed into the Dust” reverberates the tragic essence of the storyline, symbolizing the relentless and unforgiving forces that grind down the characters, Rana and Kunwar, both figuratively and literally. The geographical setting of the mountainous region serves as a metaphorical representation of the societal and natural pressures that weigh heavily on the protagonists. The narrative unfolds against the rugged backdrop of the Sana Hill range near the town of Shihor, where a mountain ridge, resembling heaved black granite rocks, sets the stage for the ill-fated love between them. The caves of mount, once believed to house the Pandavas and later used by Buddhist monks, further underscore the cyclical nature of existence, where love, like the caves, seems to exist only in traces. Rana, a shepherd boy from Vangar, captivates Kunwar, an Ahir belle, with his melodic paeans to the Mother Goddess, initiating a profound yet doomed connection.

He emerges as a symbolic figure, embodying the pastoral life and the essence of unrequited love. His nomadic existence, marked by the solitary companionship of buffaloes, becomes a metaphor for solitude he experiences in his emotional journey. His

melody reflects a spiritual connection, underscoring the depth and the intricacies of his emotional world. As he leads his buffaloes to graze on the slopes of mount Dhuvans, his unconventional appearance and nocturnal singing elicit disapproval from community. Kunwar, initially portrayed as a daughter of Chabhad Ahir, awakens to the strains of Rana's melodious voice in the pre-dawn hours, becoming the catalyst for her profound and tragically destined affection.

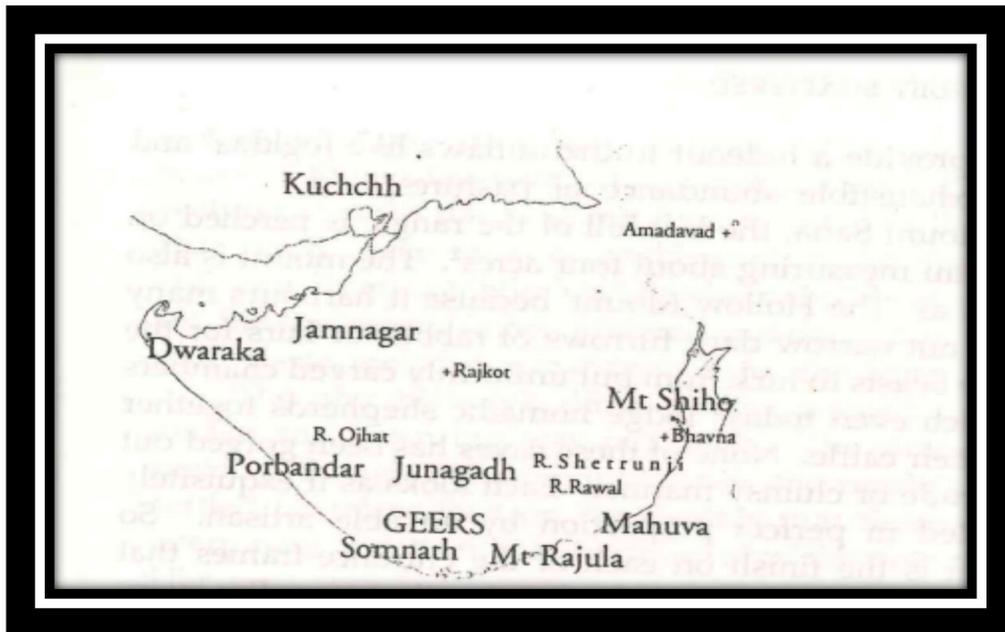


Fig. 42 Location of Mount Shihor where this tragic tale of love unfolds

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

The hamlet's chatter resounds with harsh criticisms, portraying him as repulsive and reminiscent of the harbinger of death, contributing to the communal restrictions that shape their narrative.

The story takes a dark turn when Kunwar, adorned in fresh attire, appears at the grove to present the midday meal. Noticing her unusual clothing, Rana consumes an extra loaf and casually remarks, "Kunwar, you are all decked today! Is it your birthday?," to which she replies, "Rana, keep away from me from now. Learn manners, I am engaged to be married!" serves as an ominous precursor to the impending catastrophe. Their paths diverge as she reveals her engagement, compelling him to maintain a respectful distance. Her wedding to a different man and subsequent migration to Bherai underscore the aspect of relentless influence of external forces on her destiny. The duhas between Rana and

Kunwar encapsulate poignant emotions, with Rana expressing admiration for her beauty using metaphors like a curled cobra and a swan. Kunwar's stern response, urging him to keep his distance, foreshadows the impending threat. These duhas embody the emotional complexity and cultural constraints that shape their relationship.



Fig. 43 Kunwar and Rana admiring their love for each other

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

*Rana says: "In this thick forest,*

*Where many a creature meet,*

*A maiden of Bherai too has come;*

*A comely maiden she is!"*

*("Many people flock this wilderness. A lovely maiden from Bherai village has also come.")*

*"Kunwar, like a curled cobra,*

*Can creep and hide under her nail;*

*If she stung, one's feet turned clay;*

*Kunvar she is of Chabhad clan.”*

*(“Her beauty and temper resemble those of a black she- cobra. Stung by her lure, one would be at her total mercy. The maiden named Kunvar belongs to the Chabhad clan of ahirs.”)*

*“Damn their steps who stomp their feet;*

*Kunvar's gait is like the glide of a swan.”*

*(“While other women walk with clumsy steps, my Kunvar is endowed with a gait sleek and graceful as the smooth glide of a swan.”)*

*“May their sparse hair catch fire,*

*That do not reach their napes;*

*A braid of four long tufts,*

*Sways behind her and drapes her waist.”*

*(“Afire be the scalps of those women whose thin mousy wisps dangle above their necks. Look at the long luxuriant hair of my Kunvar! When she walks, they enticingly sway over her hips!”)*

*“Curse those others' eyes,*

*Squinted and screwy they shift;*

*With eyes shapely as those of a doe,*

*Kunvar of Kot is graced.”*

And

*“Damn their bosoms*

*With flabby, sagging boobs;*

*With breasts full yet firm,*

*Kunvar of Kot is graced.”*

*(“In comparison to flabby flouncing bosoms of other women, how firm, erect and fleshy are the breasts with which my Kunvar is endowed!”)*

*“O Rana, with flowers flaming red,*

*Khakhara tree is all ablaze;*

*Beloved going to a stranger’s home,*

*Displays the dowry aplomb.”*

*(The forest was aglow by the blossoming bright red flowers of Kesuda in this first month of the spring. On a day like this, a maiden draped in equally exotic red a sash was seen being led away from the hamlet. Who could she be? Surrounded by bridesmaids and going to her wedded home was Kunvar.)*

*“One who babbles, always jabbers*

*In thoughtless gibbers;*

*Let a rattler sting her,*

*Even though she be my squaw.”*

*“Let a black rattlesnake sting the woman who talks too much, who cannot bridle her tongue, even if she is my wife.”)*

*“Soft-spoken, she who murmurs*

*With a sparkling modest smile;*

*Prick her not a thorn,*

*Though she may belong to another man.”*

*(“A tongue-tied and thoughtful woman, who always whispered with a smiling face, should not suffer even a pinprick. Even if she might not be my wife, those are my blessings.”)*

And

*“A woman sulky and foul-mouthed,*

*Ever whining with sullen eyes;*

*Be she stung by a black cobra,*

*Though she may be my spouse.”*

However,

*“One with a warm and smiling face,*

*Affection dripping from her eyes;*

*Prick her not even a thorn,*

*Though she may be a stranger’s squaw.”*

*(“A woman with a smiling face and loving eyes should not suffer even a prick of a thorn. That is my blessing though she might not be my wife.”)*

*Left Vangar 'n Madhiyun behind,  
Yielded Mahuva, the traders' town;  
To Bherai port he had to trudge,  
Though it took him all day long.  
Says Rana, he couldn't stay back,  
So forlorn was his heart;  
He took a desperate path,  
Though humiliation he had to bear.*

*(He could not adhere to his pledge. His love begone heart, which had earlier resolved that it was sinful to covet Kunvar after she was married to another man, weakened and gave in. Ignoring the hazards of breaking the resolve, he set out to meet Kunvar though it meant self-humiliation of having broken a vow.)*

*His eyes ransacked the shanties,  
Deserted lay the shacks;  
"O Sana, where did my loved one go,  
From her lodging place?"  
But crows cawed and pecked,  
Where once decrepit hutments lay;  
"O Sana, where did my loved one go,  
From her lodging place?"*

*(It was a dead, desolate site; the only sign of life was in the crows flitting about and pecking the courtyards of the ruins of the huts. In despair, Rana faced the mount and asked, “Brother, tell me where has my loved one gone away from her home?”)*

*“Of four tufts is woven her braid,*

*Chiseled are her eyes and nose;”*

*Asked Rana, “O river Rawal,*

*Did you see my beautiful beloved?”*

*(“O river Rawal, have you or anyone you know sighted my beloved Kunwar, who has a long braid twined of four tufts of luxuriant hair and who has exquisitely shaped eyes and nose?”)*

The climax unfolds in Nandivela, where Kunwar, afflicted by a mysterious ailment, sends a poignant message to Rana, “O Rana, our hamlet stands at the foothills of mount Nandivela. And without you, your Kunwar, innocent and delicate as a baby crane, has set fire to her pretense of a dedicated housewife.” Her poignant message to Rana in the face of her deteriorating health reflects her enduring connection to him. When months later, Rana learns of Kunwar’s family’s migration to Nandivela, his relentless pursuit of her leads him to beatings and ostracism. The narrative shifts to the heart of the Geer forest representing imagined space, where he wanders through wild thickets and serpentine rivers in search of her, portraying the geographical landscape as a canvas for their emotional struggles. As he succumbs to an intestinal disease in the wild thickets of the shrubberies, he becomes a tragic figure, symbolizing the erosion of love and the inevitability of destiny. In his final moments, his hallucinations of a crow as a messenger and his desperate pleas to his buffaloes reveal a soul tormented by unfulfilled desires. The orality is evident in the rhythmic and lyrical nature of these dialogues, preserving the cultural nuances of the Ahir community. These verbal exchanges paint a vivid picture of their love and separation through spoken traditions.

*Rains cascaded down the skies,*

*Lightning streaked behind the clouds;*

*Memories flooded her heart,*

*When rose the Ashadhi crescent moon.*

*(Sheets of rains came down the skies. Thunderbolts flashed in the clouds. On sighting the crescent moon of the rainy month of Ashadh, thoughts of Rana invaded her heart and caused more agonies.)*

*Peacocks warbled on the bulwark*

*As thunderbolt splashed the clouds;*

*Memories of Rana flooded her heart,*

*When rose the Ashadhi crescent moon.*

*(Peacocks perched on the mountain peaks and bastion walls sang out in glee. Crescent moon of Ashadh appeared in the sky. "Today my Rana too must be looking at the crescent moon from the peak of mount Sana! At this moment, our sights have converged on the moon! At long last! Today I have been able to meet him in this manner at least!" With a raving heart, Kunvar gazed at the moon for a long long time.)*

*"Rainy clouds like grizzly bears,*

*Packs of them hovering above;*

*As if circling to pounce,*

*To tear apart my lonesome heart."*

*“O Rana, these gray rainy clouds have invaded the heavens, as if to inflame my lovelorn heart. I feel as if packs of grizzlies are hovering all around me and closing in to seize me and tear me apart.”*)

*“Regards from the remote lands,*

*O Rana, they touch me not;*

*The distances from where you send salutes,*

*Hurt me deep within.”*

*“O Rana, o habitant of Vangar village, your regards and compliments wear out by the time they reach me this far. And the salutations you send me from so remote a place hurt my yearning heart even more. Therefore, please come! Come once at least!”*)

And

*“The rakhi twine you had tied,*

*On the day of Balev*

*Please come and unknot,*

*O love, from Kunvar's wrist.”*

*“O Rana, on the day of Balev last year you had come to the meadow and, standing in the shade of a Banyan tree, fastened a rakhi twine around my wrist. You had then said 'May God protect you', but the twine has failed to protect me. On the contrary, on seeing it on my wrist, my inquisitive in-laws torment me even more. Therefore, please come and take back your blessed twine.”*)

*At the Sana his mind found no respite;*

*It faltered, flinched and failed*

*On Dhuvans Ridge; recounts Rana,*

*How his heart then wept.*

*(At mount Sana, he could not find the peace of mind. He moved on to Dhuvans, about four miles from mount Sana, but his feet turned laden. He could go no further. The fair name of his clan nagged him and blocked his way. His conscience ultimately overcame the scruples of traditions and, with a weeping heart, he staggered into the gorge of Nandivela, not in a bold dash but weaving and wavering, flinching and falling down, coming to feet, dragging his feet and tottering.)*

*“Let Kunvar lark if she must;*

*Sana, why at me you mock?*

*Kunvar I shall charm by morrow;*

*Lie you still, o stony rock!”*

*(“O mound of stones, o cruel one, Kunvar is sulking and romping away from me. I shall soon reach her and charm her in no time. But what makes you rejoice at my pathetic state?”)*

*“The Tumour in my heart,*

*None can ever see;*

*Remedy of it all,*

*Lay in elegant Rana's hand.”*

*(“O my naive husband, the cancer is eating away my heart, not my belly. You will never be able to see it, diagnose it. Its cure is in the hands of my elegant beau, Rana.”)*

*“From where did you fly in, o crow,*

*Through the thick jungle groves?*

*On which bank of which river,*

*Did she land, beloved Kunvar mine?”*

*(“Crow, did you fly over this entire forest? Did you see Kunvar anywhere? On the bank of which river had you seen her disembarking after having sailed across its stream? O my darling bird, could you recognize my Kunvar?”)*

*“A belle lithe and lean,*

*With golden skin soft as a Pasav’s chin,*

*A maiden dainty as a jar of glass,*

*On which bank was she seen?”*

*(“She has a figure lithe and lean as a stem, skin of golden hue and a body soft as an animal called Pasav. She is delicate as glass. Have you seen this beautiful belle landing on any of the embankments you flew over?”)*

*My limbs deadened ‘n belly ballooned*

*By the Geer disease;*

*Do tell Kunvar, o dear crow,*

*On the Chachai lies Rana crippled.*

*(“Please tell her that I have fallen prey to the intestinal disease of the Geers, my limbs have become thin and brittle as twigs, my stomach is bloated, that I am destined to die at*

*mount Chachai as an invalid, that we shall never meet and that she should regard this as last farewell.”)*

*“Rana, behold it's night,*

*When the earth too has stood still;*

*Though all're asleep the only one awake,*

*Is the Kankarhar bird.”*

*(“O Rana, night is meant for rest. Human beings as well as the animal life repose at night. The only exception is a bird named Kankarhar. It seems my heart too is condemned to suffer a similar fate of eternal sleeplessness.”)*

*“Sparkling were the waters of the wells,*

*Lush 'n tender was the grass;*

*Shouldn't have moved the buffaloes mine,*

*Out of Doliya town.”*

*(“Why did I deprive my buffaloes of the sparkling fresh water of the wells and verdant and soft grass that grew in the vicinity of Doliya town?”)*

*“Who branded you on your belly,*

*O daughter of Chabhad?*

*Whose was the act so gruesome*

*That has left Kunvar defiled?”*

*(“O daughter of an Ahir of Chabhad clan, who branded your body? Dainty as a flower it was! Who was this brutal, spiteful quack to have defiled your body?”)*

*Rana, tonight of all the nights,*

*Please embrace me not so hard;*

*But there lay Kunvar's ribcage,*

*Cracked, crushed, and crumbled.*

Rana replied:

*Sparkling are the waters in the wells,*

*Lush 'n tender is the grass;*

*Shouldn't move the buffaloes mine,*

*Out of my Doliya town.”*

*(“Sister, I should not deprive my cattle of fresh sparkling water and lush green grazing grounds of Doliya town. I shall not torment them by making them migrate from a happy habitat.”)*

And also,

*“Buffaloes, frogs and fish,*

*With water they are in love;*

*Says Rana, forsake not those*

*Who live on their natural food.”*

*(Buffaloes, toads and fish love water. Therefore, these creatures should not be robbed of their sustenance, which is water, the elixir of the nature.)*

Concurrently, Kunwar too succumbs to an ailment, symbolizing the physical toll extracted to her by her husband and society. The title's resonance deepens as Rana and Kunwar, separated by destiny, reunite as skeletal forms, physically crushed into the dust with their love reduced to mere remnants. The juxtaposition of the majestic landscapes and the fragility of human emotions highlight the inevitability of life's harsh realities, where dreams are shattered, and the pursuit of love is ultimately crushed into the dust of time, leaving behind a haunting legacy of unmet desires and enduring pain.

The physical or real space is vividly depicted through the expansive and rugged Sana Hill range, a geographical entity that plays a pivotal role in shaping the destinies of the characters. The peaks, extending to the fringe of the Geer, introduce an austere landscape where nature's bounty is conspicuously absent. This desolate terrain, despite its lack of major rivers or fertile land, becomes the stage for the characters' emotional tribulations, accentuating the barrenness of their love, portraying imagined space in the narrative. Within this vast expanse, the caves of Mount Sana emerge as significant locales, described as uniformly carved chambers where nomadic shepherds find refuge alongside their cattle. These caves, with their exquisite craftsmanship, become witnesses to the enduring love legend from centuries past. The knolls and mounts, such as Rajula, Somnath, Katardhar and Dhuvans, form a backdrop against which the tragedies of Rana and Kunwar unfold. The wilderness with thorny shrubs and elusive pastures becomes a significant setting for their clandestine meetings, underscoring the stark contrast between the raw beauty of nature and the social constraints that dictate their love story. The eventual setting in Nandivela becomes a symbolic arena depicting thirdspace in the narrative, where the characters' destinies converge and diverge, leading to the heart-wrenching climax. Throughout these settings, the author masterfully weaves a tapestry that reflects not only the physical landscapes but also the intricate emotions and the relentless passage of time that shape the human experience in this tale of tragic love.

The narrative "Hothal" effectively conveys the essence of the story, resonating with the intertwined destinies of the characters, particularly Odha and Hothal. The tale unfolds as a symphony of love, sacrifice and inexorable choices, weaving together the terrestrial and the divine. The narrative initiates with the protagonist's triumphant return, establishing the groundwork for the saga's central conflict- an emotionally charged

intersection intertwining passion and familial bonds. The enigmatic presence of Ekalmal introduces a mystical element, foreshadowing the transformative journey he is about to undertake. The narrative efficiently navigates the consequences of choices, emphasizing the eternal interplay between destiny and human agency. Hothal, the celestial being, becomes the catalyst for his transcendent love, leading to a union that defies societal norms. The title, therefore, resonates with the thematic tapestry of love, sacrifice and the enduring echoes of choices, weaving the narrative's essence in a single evocative word.

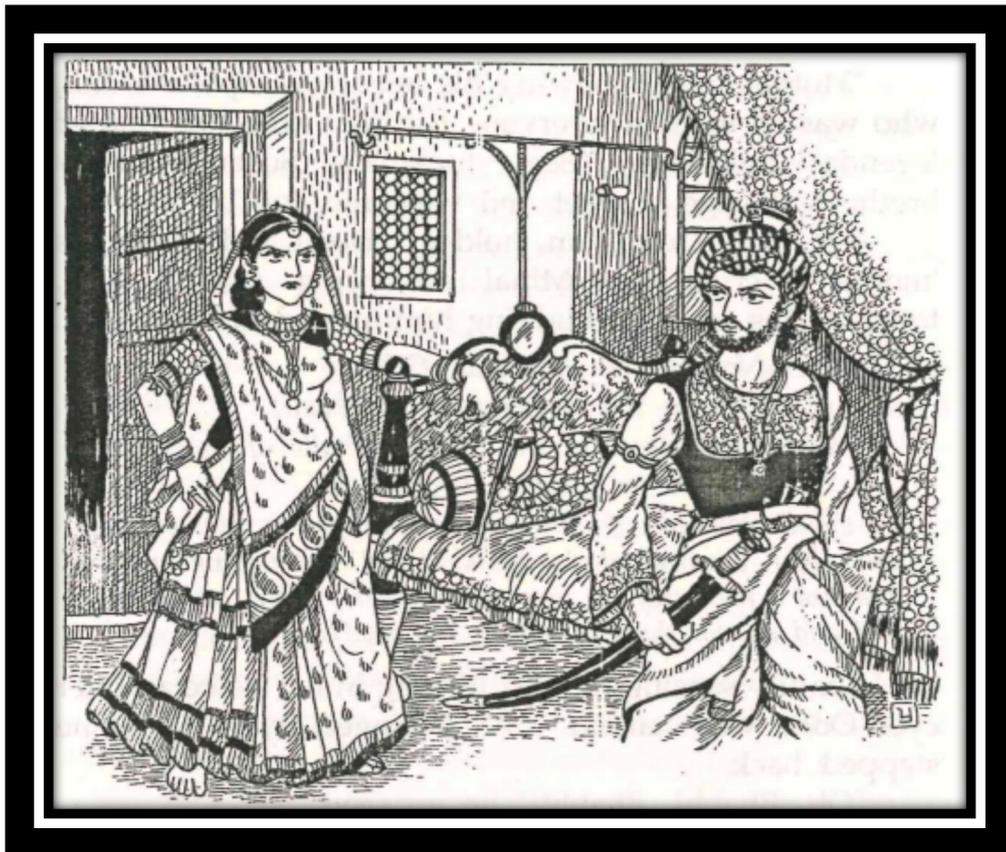


Fig. 44 Minal contemplating Odha to spend a night with her

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

In the captivating tale, the narrative begins with the triumphant return of Odha, a heroic figure renowned for his extraordinary feats and the noble qualities throughout the community. The ambiance is filled with jubilation as drums and shehnais reverberate, marking his homecoming after a prolonged absence. He is portrayed as a sacred and revered individual, embodying divine qualities akin to Lord Shiva. The anticipation builds as the wife of his elder brother Hothi, awaits his passing beneath their balcony,

highlighting the society's deep veneration for him. As he recounts his adventures to the court of Jadeja king, a subtle undercurrent of tension arises when Minal being captivated by his charm, attempts to transcend the boundaries of family dynamics.

In this duhas, the emotional turmoil of Minal is vividly portrayed as she sees Odha adorned in golden armor and a saffron suit. The verses capture her inner conflict and longing, signifying her tumultuous feelings in the face of his radiant presence. The use of direct speech, such as Minal beseeching Odha to sit on the bed and his rejection, adds a layer of orality, bringing the characters' voices to life and intensifying the dramatic exchange between them. This pivotal moment sets the stage for a tragic turn of events, as her desires lead to Odha's exile, underscoring the repercussions of misguided passion and societal expectations.

*(Seeing) the fasteners of gold,*

*On the armour of Odha*

*The heart of Minal-de lurched,*

*Down and deep within.*

*(Seeing the youthful virile warrior becomingly clad in an armour with fasteners of glittering gold, Minal's heart missed a beat.)*

*The saffron of Odha's suit,*

*Made the courtyard look all alit;*

*Radiance of his face, she thought,*

*Made the midday sun fade!*

*(When Odha, dressed in a pink attire, entered, his presence seemed to illumine her chamber. The sunshine seemed to have waned as if it had been dazzled and shamed out of the chamber by the radiance on Odha's face.)*

*Had Odha been her groom,*

*In a saffron suit and a wedding cape;*

*She 'n he, Bhabhi 'n Der,*

*What an ideal couple they'd have made!*

*(Her heart cried out: Oh God! The creator must have made us for each other! My parents must have erred in marrying me to the elder prince!)*

*“Oh! Not on the threshold, Odha,*

*Sit on the bedstead, o my beau;*

*Your thoughts wake me in the middle of the nights,*

*And keep flooding my heart!”*

*(“O Odha Jam, from the moment I began to think of you last night, I haven't slept a wink. I had been tossing in my bed like a fish writhing in shallow water. Come, sit on the bed and do not think of anyone but me.”)*

“Oh, Bhabhi, Bhabhi!” he groaned.

*“To Hothi belongs this bed,*

*And Hothi is brother mine!*

*You, his wedded wife,*

*Are like mother mine!”*

“Don't, Odha, don't!” beseeched Minal.

*“Four plus fourteen I am; Odha, behold!*

*Oh, my desires I can no longer stem.”*

*“I am eighteen! Look at me!” shrieked the sister-in-law. “I am unable to bridle my needs, Odha Jam!”*)

*“Bhabhi! Bhabhi!*

*“A cow, a woman of kin,*

*The wife of one’s Guru or one’s brother;*

*Forbidden are these four;*

*Sacred to all they should be!”*

*“Four beings I regard as inviolate,” snubbed Odha. “They are: a cow, a Guru’s wife, a woman from one’s own clan and the spouse of one’s brother.”*)

*“Cannot happen, will not happen,*

*Utter not so grave an abuse;*

*This pursuit you must stop,*

*Or the family’s name would blot!”*

*“What you are demanding will never happen. It would brand our clan forever. Stop pursuing me.”*)

*“Suffer you would, I warn;*

*For sure you will be exiled;*

*Flung afar from Kiyor,*

*Like a twig twirling in torrents!”*

*“If not, you will be miserable. You will be banished from Kiyor-Kakadana kingdom and have to leave the town in disgrace, like a flotsam washed away with a torrent.”)*

*“If you do as I say,*

*I shall turn back the cavalcade thine;*

*Stay back, be my flame,*

*I shall regale you all the while!”*

*“If you changed your mind and agreed to abide by my wishes, I can, even now, get the banishment retracted; if you agree to be my lover, I shall grant you all the favours.”)*

*Odha loaded his camels*

*And set out on a journey afar;*

*“Farewell, o Khira mount,*

*I salute thee a hundred times!”*

*(Passing by all so familiar Khira Hill on the outskirts, he bade a sad farewell to the mount.)*

*“Farewell, o Khira mount, o bosom pal,*

*I salute thee a hundred times!*

*O one precious as a rare prize chaplet,*

*Forget this Odha thine!”*

*“O my kinsman Khira, salutes, many many salutes to you. O one precious as a pearl necklace, please forget your brother Odha for good.”)*

The narrative takes a dramatic shift as he seeks refuge in the kingdom of Dholaka, forming an alliance with Ekalmal, a character introduced with impressive archery skills and a sense of camaraderie. Their mission to raid Bambhaniya's stables interlinks fate and purpose, forging a bond between the two protagonists. Ekalmal, representing virtue and duty, becomes a symbol of honor in contrast to Minal's fervour.

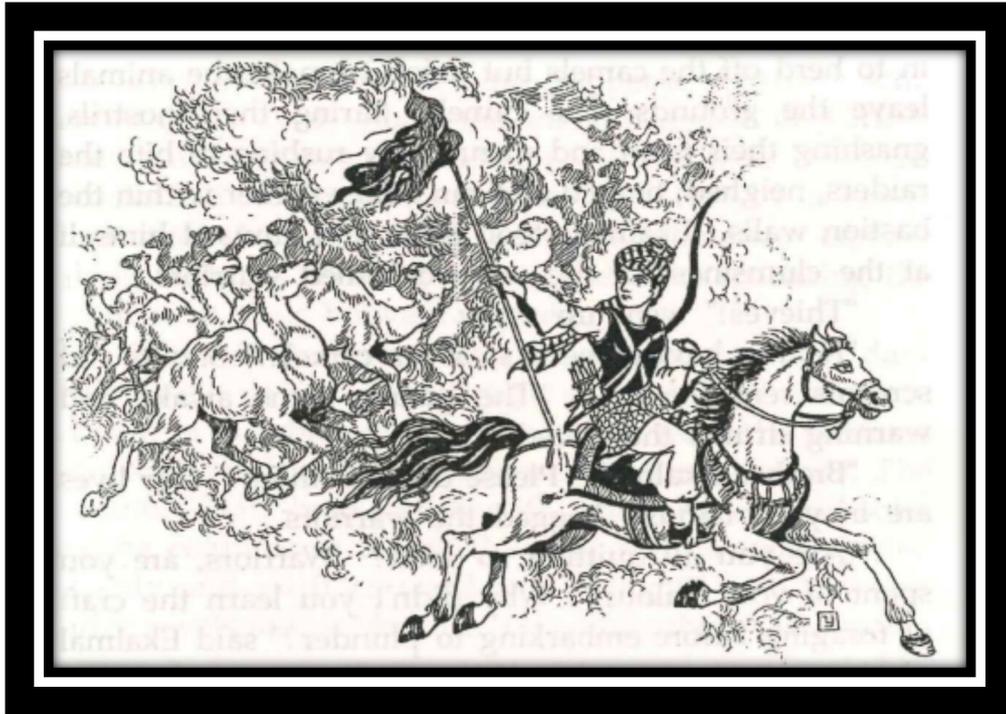


Fig. 45 Odha and Ekalmal fighting against the army of Bambhaniya

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

The story reaches its peak when they encounter Hothal, a celestial being, whose introduction brings an ethereal quality to the narrative. The love between Odha and Hothal blossoms amidst challenges, culminating in marriage and the birth of their sons, Jhakhara and Jesal. These verses depict their heartfelt union under a pomegranate tree, solemnized by walking around the sacred fire. As the narrative unfolds, the duhas explore the emotional depth of their separation, with Hothal's departure leaving Odha in the desolate Kanara vale, yearning and reminiscing amidst the echoing screeches of peacocks.

*Clambering up Chakhasar parapet,*

*Odha beheld Hothal;*

*Hair fanned on the water surface,*

*Sat the belle Angeline!*

*(Having climbed up the embankment of the lake, he sighted a divine maiden. Her ankle-long tresses of luxuriant hair, like the young ones of Vasuki snake, lay loose and floating on the rippling surface of the Lake Chakhasar, and her golden-hued body lay immersed in the water.)*

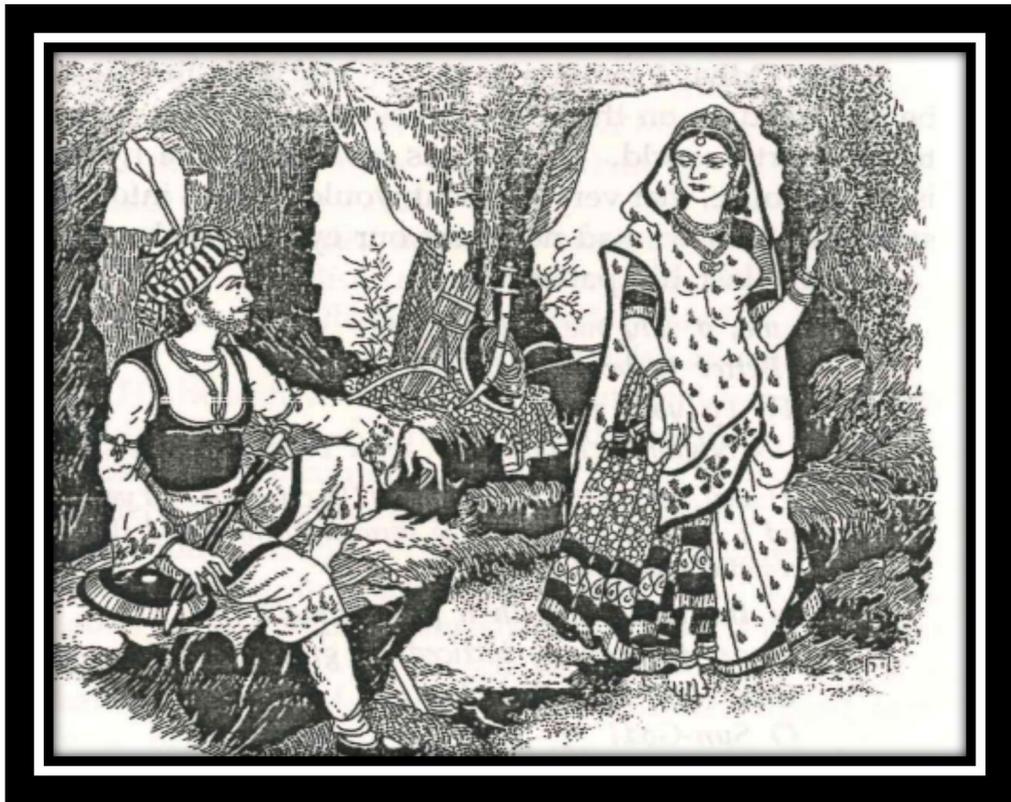


Fig. 46 Odha pulsating in love with Hothal before their separation

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

*Clambering up Chakhasar parapet,*

*He saw her, all alone,*

*Splashing and larking;*

*Her loosened hair fanned about!*

*(Unaccompanied! Beautiful as an angel! She revelled on the water surface, frolicked and flipped about like a slick crocodile!)*

Odha lost his patience:

*“Slay me, o slay me if you want;*

*Better to be slain by one’s flame.*

*Live I’ll by your will,*

*O Nigamara's daughter with bewitching eyes!”*

*(“Hothal, o daughter of Nigamara!” he cried out. “At your command I shall live, or even die because death would then be an ecstatic experience.”)*

*In the wild, beneath a pomegranate tree,*

*Under the canopy latticed by grapevines,*

*Odha and Hothal wed;*

*O Sun-God!*

*Bear witness.*

*Odha led Hothal as they walked*

*Four times around the sacred fire;*

*Nigamara’s daughter she was;*

*He, Odha, a royalty of Kiyor.*

*Rain streaked down the northern horizon,*

*Misty turned the overcast skies.*

*Like fish flipping in a shallow pond,*

*Odha's memories crawled awake.*

*"Screech not, Screech not, o peacock!*

*Fly away afar if screech you must;*

*How dare you blare your woes,*

*When Odha is drowning in the gloom!"*

*("This cursed peacock sounds like an enemy to me!" shrieked Hothal. "O peacock, don't dare screech again! Flit away afar with your ravings! At a time when my Odha is depressed, you are adding to his torments by crying out your woes!")*

**And**

*With a single arrow from my bow,*

*I'll impale you, o peacock!*

*O captivator of hearts,*

*Saddened you have Odha mine.*

*("O peacock, you better fly away or I shall kill you with an arrow from my bow, Your warbling has made Odha more miserable than he was.")*

*"Peacocks we are of the wild,*

*Pecking at the pebbles to survive;*

*In season if stifled, die we'll,*

*Our hearts'd explode by the songs unsung."*

*(“O angelic maiden, I am merely a docile bird of the hills. Our species survive by pecking at the desert sand. We do not have many pastimes other than this in our lives. If we were not to sing out even at the moment of the onset of the monsoon, which is our mating season, if we were to stifle the songs that then fill our souls, our hearts would burst and we shall perish, In the month of Ashadh how can we contain ourselves even if we want to?”)*

*“Don’t be mad, o woman enraged;*

*Stretch not the bowstring so taut!*

*Screeching they are in every gorge;*

*How many would you impale?”*

*(“No, Hothal! Don't be angry! Undo the string of your bow. In this vale, there are innumerable peacocks. At this time of the year, their songs fill every ravine. How many would you kill?”)*

And

*“Kill not a larking, contriving bird;*

*Behold its scarlet eyes!*

*It wails out its heart, day after day,*

*Yearning for its mate!”*

*(“And Hothal, are you so heartless as to prey on a bird gentle as a peacock? Look at its mauve eyes! How adorable they look! And singing is its only way to express its yearning for its loved one.”)*

And

*“Amid these verdant hills,*

*Where our joy abounds,*

*Slay not the peacock,*

*It reminds us of those effaced.”*

*(“Hothal, while we sit smug in the midst of this picturesque and lush, prosperous vale, while our happiness is spilling over, we should be grateful to the graceful one for making us think of our forgotten loved ones.”)*

*When tears soaked the*

*And his eyes turned coppery molt,*

*“O my love,” Hothal spoke,*

*“May be your heart a fairer maiden holds.”*

*(“Odha, you must be thinking of a woman more virtuous beautiful than me, or you would not spurn me as you do.”)*

*“Kanara produces pearls,*

*Only brown beans grow in Kuchchh;*

*A woman angelic as Hothal,*

*Never I've beheld in Kuchchh.”*

*(“Hothal, do not harbour doubts. I do not deserve this severe a reprimand. My own Hothal! Only the foothills of Kanara can deliver a pearl like you. All that the arid region of Kuchchh can boast of bearing is murky brown beans. In all of Kuchchh, I have never set my eyes on a maiden as beautiful as you.”)*

But

*“To that land of wild berries,*

*Shoddy flowers and thorny shrubs,*

*Hothal, let us go to Kuchchh,*

*That delivers men, rare and virile.”*

*(“In Kuchchh all that grow are wild bush and thorny shrubs. One never sights flower gardens or exotic groves of almond and walnut trees. And yet, o Hothal, today I miss my land of Kuchchh that breeds virile men, a rarity. Let us go there, Hothal, to the land that, though a barren desert, produces valiant men.”)*

*“Where steeds are of mettle,*

*And noble are the Kathi men,*

*Who modestly cover their bodies*

*Up to the ankle length,*

*Where reigns a monarch,*

*Born in the Jadu clan,*

*That's where lies Kuchchh,*

*My enchanting land.”*

*(“My fondest Kuchchh is where handsome horses are bred, and equally handsome warriors are produced. The valiant men don attires covering themselves from tip to the toe because they regard it immodest to reveal even a patch of their skin to alien eyes. And in Kuchchh rules the king of Jadu clan. There lies my magnificent native land.”)*

And

*“Rare’re the princes, tough’re the men,*

*Wellbred’re the calves;*

*For the springwater of that land tipples*

*Courage into them all.”*

*(“Princess, young warriors and the calves of rare breed, no matter how noble, would mature into brave ones only when they are nurtured by the water of Kuchchh.”)*

*“O heavenly angel,*

*“A deer will not forsake its arbor,*

*Nor a human his native land;*

*An elephant won’t leave Vindhyachal vale.*

*Forget they can’t lifelong, their dear motherland.”*

*(“Even amid the brimming happiness of the Kanara Hill, how can I forget the land of my birth? A deer can never forget its abode and an elephant of Vindhyachal mountain range would always miss his sanctuary in the vale; one can never forget one's land of birth as long as one lives. Hothal, even with my head resting in your soft, blissful lap, sleep eludes me. I cannot help thinking of my arid, scorching Kuchchh.”)*

Also

*“Forget they not until they die,*

*Peacock its knoll, elephant its vale,*

*Parrot its mango tree and humans,*

*The harsh words of their kin.”*

*(“Hothal mine, only in death can a peacock forget its hill, an elephant its sanctuary in the forest and a parrot its swaying swinging branch of a mango tree. Similarly, a human being is unable to forget the bitter admonition by a loved one and the land of his birth.”)*

*Befriend only a charan in need,*

*For he'd sing your glory while you live*

*And'd wail the dirges after you die;*

*Others are not friends, only fakes.*

*(If one must have a friend, let one befriend a charan; the others are selfish nobodies; only a charan will sing of a friend's virtues during his lifetime and eulogize him in elegies after his death.)*

*Four words in a note,*

*The hand of Hothal wrote:*

*“Odha, read and know,*

*Here bifurcates our road.”*

*And*

*The bird in hand flew away,*

*Without a trace or trail;*

*Hothal walked into the cave;*

*“Odha, to thee farewell.”*

*Oppressive felt the cave,*

*Barren earth converging to engulf;*

*Alone, all alone, without Odha,*

*Oh, how to live in the Kanara vale?*

*(Terrifying was the loneliness of the grotto. The barren earth seemed to be engulfing her. Forlorn without Odha, Hothal kept weeping bitterly.)*

*In the memories countless as*

*Ocean waves, drops of rain, desert sand,*

*And the hair bristling on one's head*

*Drowned were Hothal's days.*

*(A million times a day she thought of Odha and missed him terribly. Memories, countless as the ocean waves, drops of rain, grains of the desert sand and hair on one's head, nagged her.)*

*On a span spun by her love,*

*Her heart daily soared over the hills,*

*But peacocks screeched on every tree;*

*How to chase them all away?*

*(Like peacocks screeching all day long on the surrounding ridge, memories of Odha gnawed at her. Like hissing arrows aimed at the peacocks on the hilltop, memories erupted from her heart. But how could she hush them memories? Countless they were like the peacocks perched on every branch of every forest tree.)*

*Lamps twinkle on the ridge across,*

*Lightning flashes fill the sky;*

*Odha yearning day and night,*

*For Hothal no longer by his side.*

*(She could see the lamps alit in the foothills across where sat heartbroken Odha, all alone, brooding amid the flashes of lightning and pining for his Hothal.)*

In conclusion, the narrative delves through the intricacies of human emotions and societal constructs, offering a profound exploration of love, honor and the inevitable clashes between earthly desires and celestial duties. It leaves an indelible imprint, prompting introspection on the complexities inherent in the human experience and the eternal struggle to reconcile divine fates with worldly longings. The narrative stands not only as a gripping tale of escapade but as a timeless exploration of the human condition.

The narrative unfurls against a backdrop of diverse geographical locations, each representing a distinct physical space that shapes the characters and events. Kiyor Kakadana, situated in the Kuchchh region, stands as the initial physical setting where the story commences with the return of Odha Jam. The regal mansion becomes a tangible space, a dwelling where societal norms and familial bonds intersect, setting the stage for the ensuing drama. In contrast, the court of Jadeja king in Pirana Patan introduces an imagined space, characterized by power dynamics and political intrigue. This space transcends the physical realm, becoming a stage for Odha's recounting of adventures and the unfolding drama with Minal. As the characters seek refuge in the kingdom of Dholaka and the outskirts of the lake near Pirana Patan, an amalgamation of real and imagined spaces takes shape, representing thirdspace. It symbolizes refuge and partnership, transcending external conflicts faced by the characters and offering a space for emotional exploration. This secluded spot becomes a backdrop for meditation and contemplation, marking the culmination of Hothal's earthly presence.

In the reminiscences provided by the author, the narrative introduces the character of Hothal Padmini as a unique embodiment of romance and courage, a fusion of the essential qualities of both man and woman. The note expresses the author's lament that Hothal, the intrepid protagonist, is gradually fading from memory and emphasizes the need for her revival. The revival is not envisioned through the glorification of mere heroics but through a nuanced portrayal of her poignant Sorathi graphic. The author underscores the scarcity of comprehensive depictions of her in world literature, despite

her sporadic appearances in various features and plays. The intention is to present a more complete and detailed exploration of her character, delving into her lines that have remained unexplored. Additionally, the note mentions the recent discovery of many duha verses that shed further light on the saga of love and valor associated with her.

The narrative “A Ruby Shattered” aptly encapsulates the love legend’s central theme through a poignant metaphor. The term ‘ruby’ symbolizes the profound and vibrant love shared by the protagonist and his wife, reflecting the cultural richness of their nomadic lifestyle. The adjective ‘shattered’ signifies the irreversible fragmentation and devastation that occurs with the tragic loss of his beloved during a flood. This metaphorical representation extends beyond a mere narrative description, acting as a powerful motif that mirrors the emotional disarray and ruptured world of the central character in the narrative. The title, with its choice of words, successfully conveys the preciousness of the lost love and the enduring impact of profound loss on the human spirit. In this context, the title not only serves as a succinct encapsulation of the story’s core but also resonates with the emotional depth and intensity portrayed throughout the narrative.



Fig. 47 Charan man remembering and reminiscing the loss of his beloved wife

Source: *A Ruby Shattered*

As the legend unfolds, the herdsman and his wife engage in banter that reveals the dynamics of their relationship, with the wife playfully teasing, “O charan man, are you sure you haven’t lost your head?” The dialogues between the couple serve to depict their resilient spirit in the face of adversity, showcasing their connection to each other and to the natural world. Forced to migrate to another region of Gujarat due to a year of drought and famine, their nomadic journey becomes a testament to their endurance and the challenges faced by the Charan clan. Tragedy strikes when the wife is tragically swept away by a flood, transforming the herdsman into a bereaved poet. The impromptu duets between the herdsman and his deceased wife, in the form of duhas, become a poignant expression of love and sorrow. These poetic dialogues not only pay homage to the Charan tradition but also serve as a cathartic outlet for the herdsman’s grief, weaving a lyrical tapestry of loss and remembrance.

*Ashadh thunders, and rumbles the cloudladen sky,*

*A horse is tethered to a tree, sweetly sing peacocks.*

*Sweetly sing peacocks.*

*And melodious sound their sweet warbles,*

*For then my precious love appears in my dream.*

*Says Tamachi Sumara, behold!*

*The peahen sulks, and serenades the wooing peacock;*

*Ashadh thunders, and rumbles the cloudladen sky.*

*The peacock turns my foe; it gibes me with jarring squeaks,*

*Resounds the glen and wakes up my sleeping swain.*

*It wakes up my sleeping swain and flits away,*

*Clogging the true love’s call that lingers in the air.*

*Olive as a parrot are its wings, mauve as a cuckoo its eyes,*

*The peacock turns my foe; it gibes me with jarring squeaks.*

*“Wala, render me a roof*

*‘n a yard to sow a fistful beans;*

*I will build a shack ‘n move*

*Into your village, o Porasa!”*

*(“O Porasa Wala! If you spare a couple of vighas of wasteland for me, I’ll build a shack and cart my few belongings here.”)*

*“Peacocks sang on the mountain peaks,*

*Manors quivered and mansions quaked.*

*Lo! Rumbling came the month of Ashadh!*

*Let me now recount to you the onset of rain.”*

*(“Capering peacocks cackled on the mountain peaks and rooftops and balconies rattled by the thunder when rumbling came the month of Ashadh. Thus set in the monsoon, which I shall now describe to you all.”)*

*Lo! Rumbling came the month of Ashadh...*

*Lo! Rumbling came the month of Ashadh...*

*“Rumbled Ashadh, and lumbered the pendant sky,*

*Converged the clouds, layer upon layer they piled;*

*Rejoiced the homes in euphoric delight as*

*The rainwaters gushed on the red rooftiles.*

*Thundering Indra hovered on the earth.*

*Lakes brimmed and riverbanks breached.*

*In an air like this, o Aalan', the son of Ajmal Nathu,*

*I remember you; oh, I cannot but remember you!"*

*("Ashadh burst forth. Rain clouds invaded from all directions and piled on. The sky began to lean and droop by their burden. The rat-tat of the rain sounded like the joyful laughter let out by the mansions and the terraces. The rooftops unable to contain the rainwater overflowed and the water cascaded down the roof tiles. Indra, the Rain-God, thundered and flashed. In a season like this, I cannot but think of prince Aalan, the son of Ajmal Nathu-bhai.")*

*"Purified by rain, nine continents turn lush and green,*

*Peacocks cackle and frogs drone, their zest replete;*

*Devotees of Shiva offer pooja and pray*

*While Shravan itself is steeped by rains.*

*Men 'n women at dawn bathe 'n propitiate*

*In the name of Shankar, the Creator God;*

*In an air like this, o Aalan, the son of Ajmal Nathu,*

*I remember you; oh, I cannot but remember you!"*

*("Sanctified by the cloudburst, the whole world has turned verdant. Toads are croaking and peacocks are warbling with renewed zest. Devotees of Lord Shiva are offering pooja to Him. The rain is so heavy that it looks as if the month of Shravan has drenched and waterlogged itself. During these days, men and women mark the conclusion of their propitiations of Lord Shiva. In such a gleeful atmosphere, o my friend Aalan, I miss you.")*

*"Black is Bhadarava's cloudladen sky*

*Splashes of lightning red, blue and white.*

*Blossoms and berries abound, lotuses bloom,*

*Tendrils sprout from many a vine;*

*For sixteen days, 'n with religious fervor*

*Folks offer shraaddha and feed the crows.*

*In an air like this, o Aalan, son of Ajmal Nathu,*

*I remember you; oh, I cannot but remember you!”*

*(“The sky is overcast by low clouds of the month of Bhadrapada. Red, white and violet flashes of lightning are splashing the sky. Wild flora has bloomed in bizarre colors, and abundance of bunched berries adorns the trees. Lotuses have blossomed in the ponds, and creepers have spread out in profusion in all directions. During the sixteen days of shraaddha ceremony, feasts are being offered to the dead ancestors. People are feeding the crows for they are regarded as sages incarnate. In days like these, I think of you, my friend Aalan, and I do miss you.”)*

Porasa Wala, the landowner of the region where the dreadful incident unfolded, enters the narrative, driving the trajectory of the tale forward with his compassionate understanding of the human condition. His introduction commences a thought-provoking twist as he proposes a plan to alleviate the herdsman’s grief. The recreation of the tragic day with the deceased wife’s younger sister, dressed identically, adds a surreal and mysterious dimension to the narrative, blurring the lines between reality and memory. The resolution unfolds on the anniversary of the tragic event, with an alert about a flood prompting the herdsman to rush to the riverbank. The narrative reaches its climax with the dramatic appearance of the younger sister, accompanied by a buffalo, as the herdsman, in a moment of intense emotion, urgently pleads, “My woman! My woman’s drowning!” This scene captures the anguish and desperation felt by the herdsman, as the recreated image of his deceased wife and the symbolic presence of the buffalo come together, creating a powerful and emotionally charged moment. The convergence of these elements serves as a reminder of the tragic loss and the depth of the herdsman’s grief, adding a

layer of orality to the narrative, as he breaks into whimpering elegies in the state of delirium.

*“We came, found a noble patron*

*And we paused,*

*Oh! Bewitched they are,*

*The outskirts of your town, o Porasa!”*

*(“O squire Porasa Wala, I came and, finding a resourceful patron in you, lodged here, but the outskirts of your town have enchanted my mate and hidden her away.”)*

*“Robbed of all I had,*

*I ‘ve lost the treasure mine;*

*Bewitched they are,*

*The outskirts of your town, o Porasa!”*

*(“Porasa Wala, the vicinity of your town is like an enchantress. It has conjured away all my wealth, little that I, a poor man, had possessed. The treasure-trove of my life has been stolen from me.”)*

*“The ruby was tucked in my wrap;*

*The knot, alas, gave way.*

*The ruby has been swept away,*

*By the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!”*

*(“Oh! Porasa Wala, how unfortunate I am! I had rolled and sealed my one and only precious jewel in a corner of my shoulder-rug, but how can a knot hold on a woollen wrap? And even if it can, for how long can it hold? The knot slipped and gave way, the ruby fell and was shattered. I did not take good care of my rare gem of a woman. I left her standing alone in the riverbed. By my sheer negligence, I have lost her on your precincts.”)*

*“An alien, a rambler I was;*

*Came to you for a crumb;*

*Lost I'm in a desert night,*

*On the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!”*

*(“We had come here as refugees seeking to build a home, but I am stranded, all alone, in this eternal night of desolation.”)*

*“Suddenly, in the night,*

*Rolled in the clouds and rained;*

*My gem is swept away*

*From the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!”*

*(“When my life had reached a stage of tranquillity like the one that prevails on the earth after midnight, suddenly came the calamitous clouds. They stormed and swept away my rare jewel, o Porasa.”)*

*“A body aglow as a vermilion drip,*

*I'd cherished it as if of gold;*

*Poor and meek, I'm sponged,*

*In the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!"*

*("I had cherished my beloved, who was resplendent and dainty as a drip of vermilion salve, but by coming to your town I was robbed of her.")*

*"Like a cowering rabbit*

*Hiding from the hound,*

*My heart flutters with fright,*

*In the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!"*

*("O Porasa Wala, like a hounded rabbit breathlessly hiding in a burrow, poor I had sought refuge in the love of my woman. But death pounced on me and robbed me of my only solace. I too am fleeing from death like the desperate rabbit pursued by a hunter.")*

*"A straying camel hindered by a clog,*

*Stands alone and brays;*

*Here I stand and lament,*

*In the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!"*

*("O Porasa Wala, have you ever seen and heard a camel whimpering after having been separated from its drove? The agony of a camel astray cannot be compared with that of any other animal. Seeing it wince with pain caused by the clog and hearing it whimper in pain is an unbearable experience. Prevented from moving about by the clog on its feet, the camel just stands and whines in the eternal darkness. My soul is in a similar state at this moment.")*

*“Into a water-well, thirstily I peer;*

*A mere sight won't sate the drought, o Porasa!”*

*(“A thirsty person cannot quench his thirst merely by standing on the edge of a well and looking longingly at the water. Similarly, o Porasa, my yearning and convulsing heart peers into the vat of memories, but it seems my chance to be gratified by her charm and virtue has slipped away.”)*

*“Thorny shrubs need no water to flourish,*

*Unwatered, a banana stem won't grow, o Porasa!”*

*(“O squire, wild weeds and shrubs would keep growing even if they are not watered, but the tender stem of a banana plant must be nurtured with ample water. In the same manner, a man with strong heart can live without a woman's love, but how can my delicate soul, tender as a banana stem, survive without my mate?”)*

*“O Wala, always sow a seed*

*In a soil cool 'n damp;*

*The sapling will not sprout*

*If the earth isn't moist, o Porasa!”*

*(Squire Wala, you want me to remarry, to transplant my heart where it can draw moisture of love and grow, but patron mine, my love is tender as a sapling of banana; it grows only if it can draw humidity from the air and is watered through its roots as well. To flourish, my heart needs the love of my charan woman and none else.”)*

*“Purring and soughing,*

*When snug slept a flock of kunj,*

*In the night, one was slain,*

*On the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!”*

*(“O Porasa Wala, when a flock of kunj birds breaks the flight and rests for the night on a forest tree, each of the birds takes turn to keep vigil over the gently squeaking, sleeping colleagues. My heart too rested in a similar sense of security when suddenly came a stealthy hunter and impaled it when it was in deep slumber.”)*

*“O Wala, a cow can see*

*And hear her braying calf;*

*Yet she hankers*

*To lick him with her tongue, o Porasa!”*

*(“A cow can always see her calf and hear it bleat when it is haltered by her side, but her mother’s heart is not satisfied by merely seeing the calf; she wants to feel its presence, its existence, by licking it with her tongue. Similarly, my heart too finds no solace in mere memories of my beloved.”)*

*“Like the flitting chakwa birds,*

*My eyes keep scanning the sky;*

*At me glowers an eternal night,*

*All my horizons are unlit, o Porasa!”*

*(“From the moment the sun dips, each of the pair of Chakrawaak birds begins to flit about the sky and peers into the horizon looking for a glimmer of the dawn, for sufficient light to search its mate parted during the day. My heart too keeps gazing at the desolate horizons of my future and searching for a ray of hope which would put an end to this long*

*dark night of misery, but nowhere do I glimpse the dawn that would herald a reunion with my loved one.”)*

*“Midway through my life,*

*The roof is blown away;*

*I'll find my peace of mind,*

*Only when I'm reborn, o Porasa!”*

*And*

*“Thirsty I was when I went to a lake,*

*It suddenly went dry;*

*How do I quell a blaze,*

*When there isn't a drop to drink, o Porasa!”*

*(“O Porasa Wala, I was very thirsty and I saw a lake, but as I approached the water's edge, the lake that was brimming with water a moment earlier suddenly dried up in front of my eyes. My love has disappeared as suddenly. Now how can I extinguish the flames of my burning heart?”)*

*“All along I had cherished her*

*As if she was made of gold;*

*Only her ashes remain,*

*On the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!”*

*(“Every moment I had fondly cherished my precious mate, but she was swept away and has turned to ashes on the outskirts of your town, o squire.”)*

*“Loving, neat and cute she was;*

*Brimming was my bliss;*

*Now life is woe ‘n reproach,*

*In the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!”*

*(“The union with such a smart, comely and loving woman had brought me gratifying bliss. But now, without her, o Porasa Wala, I am condemned to convulse in a chasm of struggles and conflicts of a lonely life.”)*

*“Flame’s lost, desires remain;*

*Heart’s engulfed in turmoil;*

*Alas! A ruby lies shattered,*

*On the outskirts of your town, o Porasa!”*

*(“My life companion has left me for good. My desire for marital bliss has turned into a mirage. My desolate heart is racked by loneliness in the same manner as a floundered boat is battered by the high seas.”)*

In the poignant conclusion, the herdsman, having been wed to the younger sister of his deceased wife, engages in a surreal and emotionally charged exchange with the recreated image, questioning her steadfast wait that adds a touch of magic and closure to the narrative. It skilfully navigates the emotional terrain of love and loss while delving into cultural nuances, presenting an in-depth exploration of the human spirit in the face of tragedy. These carefully chosen elements contribute to the narrative’s intricate and emotionally resonant storytelling.

“A Ruby Shattered” unfolds within distinct geographical locations, each representing physical space imbued with symbolic significance, contributing to narrative’s rich tapestry. The drought-stricken region of Saurashtra serves as the initial

physical backdrop, portraying the harsh realities of nature that propel the herdsman to migrate. The forest becomes a poetic canvas for the duets, connecting the emotions of the characters with the natural world. The lush landscape and vibrant atmosphere symbolize the emotional richness of the herdsman's relationship with his wife, transcending the physical boundaries of the forest. The village near the riverbank, governed by Squire Porasa Wala, emerges as a crucial setting for the narrative's turning point. The juxtaposition of the quaint village and the impending tragedy adds depth to the storytelling. The riverbank itself, where the recreated scene unfolds, becomes a locus of emotional intensity. The physical landscapes embarked in the narrative embodies lived space, portraying the tangible experiences of the characters within these environments.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Jhaverchand Meghani's engagement with the diverse landscapes of Saurashtra in his narratives reflect a nuanced understanding of the region's ecological complexity and its profound influence on the nature of the area. Saurashtra, characterized by multiple ecological zones such as the semi-arid Thar desert, the forested hills of Gir, and the extensive Arabian Sea coast, forms a geographical mosaic that has played a pivotal role in shaping the historical and cultural dynamics of the region. Meghani's critical analysis of these landscapes in his unveils several layers of significance:

Firstly, Meghani recognizes the ecological diversity of Saurashtra as more than just physical features. Each ecological zone signifies a distinct way of life, reflecting the adaptability and resilience of the people who have historically inhabited these regions. The Thar desert, with its arid conditions, evokes the spirit of nomadic pastoralists and itinerant merchants, while the forested hills of Gir resonate with the unique habitat of the Asiatic lions and the traditions of local communities. Secondly, it underscores the historical mobility and migration that have been integral to Saurashtra for centuries. The diverse ecologies facilitated the movement of various groups—merchants, pilgrims, pastoralists, and warriors—creating a dynamic and interconnected social landscape. Thirdly, the engagement with Saurashtra's landscapes serves as a narrative device through which Meghani portrays the region's unique identity. By delving into the ecological nuances, he captures not only the physical beauty of the land but also its cultural vibrancy. The Arabian Sea coast, connecting Saurashtra to Indian Ocean networks, symbolizes both a source of livelihood and a conduit for cultural exchange. His

critical analysis of these landscapes becomes a means to unravel the layers of history and tradition imprinted on the physical geography of the region.

### Works Cited

“Books by Jhaverchand Meghani (Author of Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar).” *Goodreads*, [www.goodreads.com/author/list/4095197.Jhaverchand\\_Meghani](http://www.goodreads.com/author/list/4095197.Jhaverchand_Meghani). Accessed 12 Jul. 2022.

“ThirdSpace.” *Geography*. Accessed 18 May. 2023.

“ઝવેરચંદ કાળીદાસ મેઘાણી.” *JHAVERCHAND MEGHANI'S LITERATURE*, [meghani.com/](http://meghani.com/). Accessed 26 Jan. 2023.

Atkinson, David, editor. *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*. I.B. Tauris in the United States distributed by Palgrave Macmillan, 2005

Dorson, Richard M. ‘Current Folklore Theories’. *Current Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 1, Feb. 1963, pp. 93–112. DOI.org (Crossref), doi: 10.1086/200339.

Fabula, Équipe. "Space in Literature: Questioning Space in Fiction." *Fabula.org*. Web. 18 July 2019.

Harding, James Martin, and Cindy Rosenthal, editors. *The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Harvey, David. "Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination."

Holtz, William. ‘Spatial Form in Modern Literature: A Reconsideration’. *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 4, no. 2, Dec. 1977, pp. 271–83. DOI.org (Crossref), doi: 10.1086/447937.

Kane, Michael. *Postmodern Time and Space in Fiction and Theory*. Springer International Publishing, 2020. DOI.org (Crossref), doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-37449-5.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Blackwell, 1991.

Maanen, Henk-Jan van, and Ingram Smit. "Third Space - Geography."  
Geography.ruhosting.nl.

Malmio, Kristina, and Kaisa Kurikka. Contemporary Nordic Literature and Spatiality.

Merrifield, Andrew. "Place and Space: A Lefevrierian Reconciliation." JSTOR 18.4. 1993.