CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS

AND

CONCLUSION

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"My work in folklore represents the world of women and children. More or less unconsciously, I have decided not to talk about India through the Sanskrit Texts, but through the mother tongue texts, both written and oral. India not as seen through some epic like Ramayana which privileges the male, but through folk epics, folk tales which are told by women, by nonliterate part of the population."

- A.K. Ramanujan

Jhaverchand Meghani (1896-1947) is an eminent and illustrious name in the Gujarati literature. As a pioneering researcher and a renowned folklorist, he carried out painstaking channeling and excavation of the folklore of Saurashtra region over a span of twenty-five years by wandering on foot, riding horses or camels and by sailing the ships. In a comparatively short literary career of about twenty-five years, he turned out to write more than eighty volumes of the folktales, biographies of the outlaws, novels, plays, poems and the critical essays containing valuable materials which can be helpful for further research in the folk literature of the Saurashtra depicting the horizons of the region, religion and culture. He has paid homage to the era by responding to the contemporary burning issues of social disparities and the surge of nationalism in his novels, folk narratives, translated folklores and plays from Bengali into Gujarati. Gifted with an expressive voice, he has rendered lyrics with passion voicing his own creativity. He has dealt with his exhaustive discourses in the perspectives of the universal folklore by crafting the outlaws and their odes, descriptions of the saint poets and their bhajans, tales of the legends of the land, history of the Charans and the Charani's literature, sailor's songs, lullabies, wedding songs and elegies which has beautifully showcased and presented before the world, the culture and region of a unique land located amidst the heart of Gujarat, known as Saurashtra.

The culmination of these efforts manifested in sixteen volumes of folk tales, each narrative serving as a testament to the vibrant folk literature of Saurashtra. Additionally,

the individual meticulously compiled ten volumes of folk songs, further enriching the cultural tapestry of the region. Through the meticulous reconstruction of these tales and legends, the individual not only captured the essence of Saurashtra as a geographic region but also contributed to its identity by showcasing the diverse narratives that underscored its cultural richness. In essence, every collected folk tale became a chronicle of travel, offering a window into the collective memory and heritage of the Saurashtra community.

Within the intricate tapestry of Saurashtra's folk tales, the narratives vividly illuminate the remarkable resilience and fortitude of its women. These tales serve as poignant chronicles of their enduring struggles and unwavering sacrifices, as they navigate the pervasive patriarchal dominance embedded in the socio-cultural fabric. Through the lens of Meghani's storytelling, these women emerge as embodiments of valour, transcending societal expectations to resist and challenge prevailing norms within the gendered spaces they inhabit. Their narrative arcs unfold as compelling sagas of resistance, as they confront formidable odds to safeguard their self-esteem and assert their agency within the constraints of traditionally defined roles. The folk tales reflect the profound love these women harbour, not just for themselves but also for their families, epitomizing a delicate balance between familial responsibilities and personal aspirations. In the gendered spaces depicted by Meghani, these women become emblematic figures, challenging stereotypes, and carving out spaces of empowerment within the traditional confines. The folk tales, thus, serve as powerful testaments to the indomitable spirit of Saurashtra's women, portraying them as architects of change within their communities.

The first section of this chapter presents the summary of the previous chapters as a grounding for the conclusive segment.

Chapter One Summarised

The introduction presents a sophisticated exploration of the evolving conceptualization of space, challenging conventional views by emphasizing its dynamic and active role in human experiences. Carter's critique of modernity's 'imperial history' lays the groundwork by exposing the tendency to reduce space to a passive backdrop, neglecting its intricate interplay with human actions and choices. This perspective aligns with Foucault's argument against the devaluation of space as 'anti-history,' disrupting the traditional perception of space as static and underscoring its dynamic influence on

societal developments. The introduction effectively prompts a re-evaluation of historical narratives, urging a departure from linear progress towards a more nuanced understanding of spatial dynamics. The mention of the spatial turn in literature and its connection to complex psychological portrayals signify a broader recognition of the intricate relationship between space, narrative and human agency. Overall, the introduction serves as a compelling invitation to rethink the significance of space, setting the stage for a thorough examination of its role in shaping cultural representations, storytelling and societal structures within the realms of critical theory and literary analysis.

Chapter Two Summarised

The second chapter of the Systematic Review of Literature astutely delves into the foundational significance of space in scholarly endeavors, drawing attention to Lefebvre's critique of the pervasive tendency to marginalize space within intellectual discourse. The chapter commences with a poignant quote by Tim B. Rogers, articulating the pervasive oversight of space in scholarly pursuits. The chapter meticulously navigates the challenges inherent in studying space, cogently arguing that despite its foundational role in shaping human experiences and interactions, it remains relegated to the periphery of intellectual debates. The comprehensive review of existing research papers, particularly those exploring spatial theory in contemporary literature and cultural geographies, adds scholarly weight to the argument. Importantly, the chapter identifies a research gap and proposes a novel direction by advocating for an exploration of spatial theory in translated folk narratives of Jhaverchand Meghani. This innovative approach promises to unveil the intricate interplay between region, place and spatial dynamics in literature, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted relationship between space and narratives. In essence, the chapter critically interrogates the neglect of space in scholarly discourse, advocating for a paradigm shift that recognizes its pivotal role in shaping knowledge production and intellectual discourse.

Chapter Three Summarised

The narratives in *A Noble Heritage* collectively unravel a subtle exploration of space within the cultural fabric of Saurashtra, transcending conventional gender and societal norms. The physical settings, from the picturesque yet perilous landscapes of Lakhapadar to the rustic expanses of Lakhavad village, become more than mere

backdrops, intricately woven into the narratives. The harsh realities of societal rituals and power dynamics unfold in Chalala town, while Lakhapadar serves as a crucible for the defiance of oppressive authority and the dismantling of gender stereotypes. The aesthetic allure of the villages contrasts with the imminent dangers and transformative potential within these spaces, symbolizing the interplay between visual appeal and societal upheaval. In *A Horserace*, Luna Khachar strategically manipulates circumstances, turning the race into a spectacle that reflects the performative nature of communal interactions, providing a metaphorical lens into cultural norms and the pursuit of recognition. The narratives' spatial dynamics are emblematic of Lefebvre's, Soja's and Harvey's concept of the production of space, as the characters navigate and challenge the physical and social dimensions of their environment. These narratives collectively underscore the pivotal role of space in shaping and challenging cultural narratives, offering vibrancy of Saurashtra region.Top of Form

Chapter Four Summarised

In the literary tapestry woven by Jhaverchand Meghani, The Shade Crimson and its exploration of Saurashtra's oral traditions intertwine with spatial dimensions, challenging the prevailing disregard for folk narratives. *Her Inheritance* encapsulates the spatial complexities of rural Saurashtra, as Heer-bai defies societal norms, navigating familial obligations and societal expectations. The spatial elements are vividly depicted through the rituals of loading dowry carts and the symbolic significance of the manor's courtyard. In *A Mare and Her Rider*, the narrative transcends geographical spaces, exploring the emotional landscape as Sootha traverses challenging terrains. The duha captures the essence of the human-animal bond and the sacrifice embodied by Maanaki. *An Outlaw* masterfully navigates the spatial dynamics of the royal court, the refuge in Mount Jodhpariya, and the familial retribution encountered by the outlaws, revealing the interplay between physical and metaphysical spaces. *Redemption* intricately crafts spatial layers in Roopi's transformative journey, intertwining societal expectations with the distant ravines and the symbolic well. Lastly, *Tall as a Palm Tree* weaves through villages and conflict zones, underscoring the spatial complexities of Bheem Garaniya's heroism. In *O Bhagirathi*, Junagadh becomes the backdrop for a profound clash of beliefs, with Rajde's spiritual struggle laid bare in the architectural space of the minaret. Meghani's narratives collectively form a scholastic exploration of spatial dimensions,

illuminating the nuanced interplay between physical landscapes and the intricate realms of human experiences and cultural legacy within the rich heritage of Saurashtra.

Chapter Five Summarised

In A Ruby Shattered, an anthology illuminating Kathiawar's folk ballads artfully navigates the interplay between space and narrative. Rooted in the historical and cultural dynamics of Saurashtra, Meghani expertly threads the tension between preserving the oral traditions of charans and conforming to colonial-era norms. The central narrative of *A Maiden Love* unfolds against the backdrop of the untamed Geer highlands, symbolizing Vijanand's nomadic upbringing, while Sheni's transformative journey to the Himalayas becomes a spatial metaphor for her determination and sacrifice. *Ghastly Wailed the Ghost* seamlessly blends oral traditions with temporal components, utilizing spaces like the Geer sanctuary and Ojhat riverbanks to mirror characters' emotional landscapes. The tale of Mangada Wala and Padmavati in forbidden love transcends physical spaces, intertwining haunted Banyan groves and ceremonial immersion sites to convey a cyclical journey towards salvation. *On the Bank of the Shetrunji* intricately weaves the river as a metaphor for changing destinies, using the riverside village as a canvas for the daily rhythms of Ahir life. The friendship between Anal-de and Devara navigates societal spaces, embodying the struggle for autonomy within the cultural milieu. Meghani's anthology, through an intricate dance with space, masterfully preserves cultural heritage amid the transformative currents of colonial times.

This research unfolded that Meghani documented the oral traditions, stories, legends and experiences while travelling the length and breadth of Saurashtra. in the capacity of a literary editor for the weekly publication 'Saurashtra', Meghani, afforded a respite of three days each weekend, immersed himself in an extensive exploration of the rich folklore and oral traditions of Saurashtra on a variety of modes of travel, including hiking trails, horseback riding, camel riding, and bullock-cart, narrow gauge trains and country carts traversing and navigating the diverse landscapes with an intentional pursuit of meeting Charan bards, Bhat balladeers, Bharathari Bhajan singers, and Turi storytellers encompassing a broad spectrum of perspectives, listening to women from diverse communities, their struggles, sacrifices, therefore women which gets reflected in Armed with a humble demeanour and a friendly disposition, they adeptly captured the attention of their hosts, urging them to share the oral traditions passed down through generations.

The theory of folk narratives has also been interconnected to the propositions of space, as it is categorized into three parts by Henri Lefebvre as Real space, Lived space and Produced space in his work *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre,1974). The research has taken into its ambit, these concepts and explored Saurashtra unfolding the space of social practices, the social, material and traditional culture. Lived space which constitutes, expresses and constructs the system of space in which Meghani's folk world operates constituting, forming culture of the region in question and stratum of its population. The Produced space which is meant to be decoded/ comprehended and is in itself a process of signification. Henri Lefebvre, as a Marxist philosopher and sociologist, viewed space as a social product shaped by the relations of production and class struggles. His theory of space emphasizes the importance of understanding the socio-economic context in which space is produced and experienced. When analyzing folk narratives of Jhaverchand Meghani, Lefebvre's perspective offered insights into the underlying social dynamics and power structures reflected in these tales as discussed in the following specifications:

Class Struggles and Spatial Organization

Lefebvre argued that space is not neutral but reflects the interests and struggles of different social classes. In Meghani's folk tales, one can discern narratives of class struggle, where communities resist domination by those in power. Lefebvre's framework encourages us to examine how spatial organization within these narratives reflects and reinforces existing power relations.

Production of Space

According to Lefebvre, space is produced through social practices, including economic activities. Meghani's folk tales often depict rural life and economic activities such as farming, herding, and craftwork. Lefebvre's perspective prompts us to analyze how these economic activities shape the spatial organization of the communities depicted in the narratives and how they contribute to the construction of social space.

Everyday Life and Lived Space

Lefebvre emphasized the significance of everyday life in the production and experience of space. In Meghani's folk tales, everyday activities, rituals, and interactions within rural communities are central to the narrative. Lefebvre's focus on lived space

served instrumental to explore how the everyday experiences of characters in these tales are shaped by broader social structures dominatingly of family in these narratives, and how they, in turn, contribute to the production of space. There are excerpts from the narratives one being that of Heerbai where (Chora becomes the space where Heerbai takes a strong decision of remarrying her father after improving his health giving a stern and befitting reply).

Symbolic Representations of Space

Lefebvre also highlighted the symbolic dimensions of space and how they reflect social meanings and power relations. In Meghani's folk tales, the portrayal of landscapes, villages, and other spatial settings often carries symbolic significance, representing not only physical space but also social hierarchies, cultural values, and historical struggles.

Perceived space, in Lefebvre's terms, refers to the space of everyday experiences, the space we encounter through our senses. Perceived space was analyzed by examining how characters interacted with and perceived their immediate surroundings. It involves the sensory and perceptual aspects of spatial experiences described in the stories. For instance, descriptions of landscapes, settings, and sensory details contribute to the perceived space within the narrative.

Conceived Space, the space as planned and mapped, often influenced by abstract ideas, representations, and mental constructs depicted through elements like myths, legends, and cultural beliefs that shape how characters conceptualize their surroundings. exploring the mental representations and cultural constructs that influence characters' understanding of the world around them. Lived space is directly experienced and appropriated by individuals, embodying the subjective and existential aspects of spatial encounters which also delves into the personal and existential dimensions of characters' interactions with their environment. This involves exploring how characters emotionally connect with specific spaces, the significance attached to certain places, and how their personal experiences shape their understanding of the world. It captures the lived-in, everyday realities of characters within the narrative.

This research has also undertaken the comparison and contrast between Soja's and Lefebvre's spatial concepts:

1. Perceived Space (Lefebvre) vs. First Space (Soja)

- *Perceived* Space: Focuses on the sensory and everyday experiences of space.

- *First Space:* Represents the physical, empirical spaces we encounter.

The vivid description of a village landscape or a character's interaction with the natural surroundings illustrates both Perceived Space and First Space.

2. Conceived Space (Lefebvre) vs. Second Space (Soja)

- *Conceived Space:* Involves mental representations, abstract ideas, and cultural constructs shaping space.

- *Second Space:* Refers to the imagined, symbolic, or representational aspects of space.

The portrayal of mythical realms or culturally significant spaces in a folk narrative represents both Conceived Space and Second Space.

3. Lived Space (Lefebvre) vs. Third Space (Soja)

- *Lived Space:* Encompasses the subjective, existential, and personally appropriated aspects of space.

- *Third Space:* Represents the hybrid, in-between spaces that emerge from the blending of different cultural, social, or spatial elements.

A character's emotional connection to a particular location, which holds personal or cultural significance, illustrates both Lived Space and Third Space.

The contrast in these two spatial theorists can be discerned as following:

1. Nature of Spaces

- *Lefebvre:* Distinguishes between sensory experiences, mental representations, and existential engagement.

- *Soja:* Focuses on empirical spaces, imagined spaces, and hybrid, transformative spaces.

2. **Empirical vs. Imagined**

   - *Lefebvre:* Emphasizes the transition from sensory experiences to mental constructs to personal engagement.

   - *Soja:* Highlights the coexistence and blending of empirical, imagined, and hybrid spaces simultaneously.

2. **Cultural Significance**

   - *Lefebvre:* Conceptualizes spaces influenced by cultural constructs and individual experiences.

   - *Soja:* Explores the hybridization of spaces through cultural, social, and spatial interactions.

3. **Hybridity and Transformation**

   - *Lefebvre:* Doesn't explicitly address hybrid spaces.

   - *Soja:* Emphasizes the transformative potential of Third Space resulting from the intersection of different spatial and cultural elements.

Constructing Saurashtra as a Region Interconnection of Region and Space

In traditional geography, "a region is often defined as an area characterized by certain common features, be they physical, cultural, or economic. Space, on the other hand, is the broader context that encompasses all physical entities. Regions are specific manifestations within this spatial framework (Lefebvre, 1991)". The interconnection lies in the idea that "spaces are not homogenous; they are composed of regions with distinct characteristics. Regions contribute to the differentiation of space into meaningful and distinguishable entities (Massey, 1994)". On the contrary, Human geography introduces a social dimension to the relationship. "Spaces, especially urban spaces, are shaped by human activities and interactions. Regions within these spaces emerge as social constructs influenced by cultural, economic, and political factors (Soja, 1996)". And the

interconnection here "is evident in the dynamic nature of spaces. Regions **within** spaces are not static; they evolve based on human behaviours and societal changes (Harvey, 2006)". In literature, "spaces and regions are often depicted through the lens of setting and place. The literary portrayal of regions within a space contributes to the narrative's sense of atmosphere, mood, and cultural context (Bachelard, 1958)". Literature (Meghani's Folk Narratives) transforms abstract spaces into tangible regions with emotional and symbolic significance and Saurashtra in literature becomes essential elements for storytelling and character development. The construction of Saurashtra imparts power to the region itself as Saurashtra has emerged as a site of power and influence within a broader space. Saurashtra is not confined to physical boundaries but extends into imaginative and transformative space that evokes emotions and memories, "transcending the mere physical boundaries (Bachelard, 1958)". This established interconnection between region and space is evident in their reciprocal relationship, Saurashtra contributes to the differentiation and characterization of space, while space provides the overarching context for the existence and evolution of regions. Integrating these perspectives offers a more comprehensive understanding of how Saurashtra as a region and as a space intersects and diverges within geographical, human geographical, and literary contexts. The regional consciousness that arose due to the spatial turn seeped in India through the emergence of the nationalist consciousness. "As nationalist ideas also developed in this period, Indian elites expressed, and became invested in, certain notions of history, geography, and language that they came to regard as embodying their own particular regions. These elite-driven trends, while varying across the subcontinent, dominated the ways that many of the regions were conceived within preexisting and colonial administrative units (Kapadia, 21)". Moreover, the idea of a separate 'Gujarat' state had already started floating in the western circuit which propelled the process of formation of Gujarat that culminated in 1960. "The dominant ideas that constituted this consciousness were primarily asserted in the writings of upper-caste Hindus and Jain intellectuals based in cities like Bombay, Surat, and Ahmadabad. For these men, "Gujarat" was to be unified by a standardized Gujarati, a form of the language that was spoken in North Gujarat and one that they considered to be "good" and "correct (Isaka 2000)". "The local vocabularies in other areas or elements of Arabic and Persian in the language were "impure" accretions that needed to be cauterized; their criticism was directed particularly toward the Zoroastrian Parsi community, whose influence on the region was deep and whose spoken language was distinct from that of the Hindu literati

(Isaka 2000)". It was through writing history and literature, including the creation of a normative literary canon for Gujarati, that this intelligentsia's ideas of regional consciousness were most assertively expressed. Spatially, Gujarat's regional consciousness subsumed other culturally and linguistically distinct areas within its ambit, particularly the peninsular regions of Saurashtra and Kachchh. The distinctive histories and linguistic features of Saurashtra though being different from Gujarat areas thus became fused with this newly imagined Gujarat.

The project offers another proposition as observed while critically studying the narratives that Meghani's endeavor to capture the essence of Saurashtra specifically focuses on the aesthetics and the experiential aspects of Saurashtra overlooked certain crucial historical aspects that shaped the region. There is a very little mentioning or exploration of violence, whether it be conflicts between leaders or the ritualized violence inherent in the region's warrior culture. While Meghani romanticized Saurashtra's oral traditions and revered the Charans, the bards of Saurashtra, and the Rajputs as their custodians, he does not address the historical violence integral to Rajputs. Meghani in his travelogues clearly laments "how the British wasted little time wresting the chieftains of their power through a variety of indirect controls and eliminating Charans' role as part of their attempts to "regulate" and "settle" this frontier region once these territories were ceded to the Bombay Presidency and came under the colonial state's control (Kapadia, 2021). "He also reflects somewhat hesitantly on whether these new proclivities were indicative of the inevitable decline of the "warrior castes" (vīr jātio), a decline he had heard "was inevitable": "their usefulness is now finished" (Meghani [1928, 1935] 1994, in Kapadia, 21). But he continues, "No, no! These ominous words do not suit my mouth. May formal education and cultural improvement reach here as soon as possible, that is the only prayer". In much of his travels, Meghani laments modernity's negative effects on a pristine land, but here he yearns for it as means to improve his subjects' situation. Meghani thus engaged with Saurashtra's "disappearing spirit" through a contradictor Instead, his narratives emphasized the nostalgic reverence for the region's heroic past, primarily through stories, poetry, and sentiments of bygone glory.

Western and Indian Idea of Folk

This research evinced the Western and Indian idea of folk bringing the pertinent question to the fore: Whether Indian folk narratives can be comprehended through the

lens of western conceptualisation of the folk is addressed in this section. The Indian renaissance that took place in the 19th century marked the emergence of various forms of prose, with a notable focus on genres related to history, politics, religion, and culture. The impetus behind this literary endeavour originated from a twofold drive: a profound fascination with the re-examination of India's rich historical legacy and a heightened consciousness of present-day sociopolitical concerns. During this particular era, there was a notable emergence of various literary genres that encompassed a wide range of forms such as biography, autobiography, short stories, essays, travelogues, criticism, comic literature, children's literature, editions, publications, and critical analyses of folk literature. During the period preceding India's independence, a noticeable shift took place in the country's ethos paving way for an emerging sense of self-awareness. The influential figure of Mahatma Gandhi played a significant role in amplifying the resurgence of the Indian identity. The emergence of non-violence, nationalism and a collective consciousness rooted in principles of fraternity and equality posed a significant challenge to the prevailing belief in western superiority, thereby revitalising the pursuit of a distinct Indian identity.

The political turmoil, which initially remained limited to the intellectual elite, rapidly spread throughout the wider population during the period of British colonial rule. The political agitation resulted in a renewed interest in the investigation of ancient Indian culture and the literary works of Sanskrit literature. During this particular era, the dominant political atmosphere demonstrated a favourable environment for the resurgence of conventional collections of myths and narratives that showcased heroic and noble characters. These narratives were strategically utilised to evoke patriotic sentiments among the general population. The scholars at the universities initiated an extensive investigation into the ancient history of India, aiming to uncover the underlying themes and visions associated with a prosperous era that passed a long time ago. The objective of their endeavour was to extract comfort and a deep feeling of satisfaction from the intricate and diverse fabric of historical and cultural legacy. Prominent figures such as Alexander Forbes, Kava Dalmatian, Koradji Himeji, Framing Bamganie, Narmad, Mahipatram Rupram Neelkanth, Govardhanram Tripathi, Ranjitram Vavabhai, Gijubhai Badheka, Nanalal, Umashankar Joshi, Jhaverchand Meghani and Kaka Kalelkar undertook meticulous initiatives and efforts to unearth and advance the extensive cultural heritage of Gujarat through diverse methods including the creation, dissemination and

editing of folk literature. Notably, Meghani's scholarly engagement with folk literature transcended specific genres or aspects, setting him apart from both his predecessors and successors with his comprehensive and exhaustive approach, providing invaluable insights into this multifaceted domain.

Hu pahad nu balak.(I am the child of mountain.)

- Jhaverchand Meghani.

In 1918, amidst the backdrop of the Russian revolution and the emergence of the Gandhian Era, a recently graduated Gujarati individual named Jhaverchand Meghani relocated to Kolkata and secured employment at an aluminium manufacturing factory. He dedicated himself to rigorous research for a span of three years. In his leisure hours, he deeply engaged himself in the surge of the literary renaissance occurring in Bengal, diligently honing his skills in the Bengali language. He was exposed to the works of esteemed literary figures such as Tagore and Dwijendra, as well as institutions such as the Brahmosamaj, which had a significant impact on his intellectual development. The Bengali intellectuals' influence on him regarding the impact of folklore piqued his interest in exploring the abundant folk-literature of his native Saurashtra region, which he describes as a peninsula with ancient origins situated on the westernmost coast of India. With unbridled enthusiasm, he submitted his resignation papers and purchased a ticket to Kathiawar, currently recognised as Saurashtra. Jhaverchand Kalidas Meghani (1896-1947) was a distinguished poet who was bestowed with the esteemed title of Rashtriya Shayar for his poetry that embodied the spirit of nationalism.

Folklore: The Indian and the Western Paradigm

Folklore, as a cultural expression, plays a pivotal role in shaping the identity and psyche of societies across the globe. The distinct historical, social, and cultural contexts of India, Europe, and America have given rise to unique folklore identities, reflecting the diversity of human experience. In this comprehensive exploration, we will delve into past and modern theories of folklore to understand how Indian folklore identity differs from its European and American counterparts. Drawing from relevant texts, the aim is to provide a reasoned analysis that illuminates the nuanced aspects of these rich cultural weaves.

Western Approaches of Folklore

Romantic Nationalism in European Folklore

European folklore, during the Romantic era, (late 18th century and early 19th Century) was deeply influenced by the currents of nationalism. Grimm Brothers collected and compiled fairy tales, emphasizing the idea that folk traditions encapsulated the essence of national identity. In "Grimm's Fairy Tales," they sought to preserve the Germanic cultural heritage, presenting folk narratives as repositories of the 'Volkgeist', or national spirit. European folklore, in this context, became a means of constructing a shared identity rooted in linguistic, historical, and cultural affinities.

Colonial Perspectives on American Folklore

In America, the study of folklore was shaped by colonial encounters and cultural hybridity. Franz Boas emphasized the importance of understanding Native American folklore within its cultural context. Boas's work, "The Mind of Primitive Man," challenged Eurocentric perspectives, advocating for a holistic understanding of diverse folklore traditions. The colonial backdrop of America added layers to its folklore identity, blending Indigenous, African, and European elements into a complex cultural mosaic.

Cultural Studies and Folklore in America

In America, the rise of cultural studies has enriched the understanding of folklore identity. Richard Dorson, a key figure in American folklore studies, advocated for a broader view of folklore that includes not only traditional tales but also contemporary urban legends and popular culture. In "Folklore and Fakelore," Dorson critiqued the commodification of folklore, emphasizing the need to consider contemporary expressions. This approach allows for a more inclusive understanding of American folklore identity, which is not confined to historical rural traditions but encompasses the multifaceted expressions of diverse communities.

Syncretism and Diversity in Indian Folklore

This research again advocates syncretism and regional diversity in the Indian folk literature.   India, with its rich diversity of languages, religions, and traditions, exhibits a unique syncretism in its folklore asserting and celebrating local myths, legends, customs,

and rituals merged with mainstream religious practices all regionalities and regions signifying that India is a melting pot of all folk literatures. A notable aspect is the regional diversity, where each state and community (here Saurashtra, Kathiawar) contribute to a broader, yet intricate, Indian folklore identity (Ramanujan, 1989). On locating folk literature in Indian cultural context hybridity and ambivalence inherent in postcolonial identities is emphasised (Bhabha, 1994). Indian folklore, in this context, becomes a dynamic space where traditional and colonial influences coalesce, offering a unique negotiation of identity challenging the notion of a fixed, essentialized folklore identity and highlights the ongoing process of identity formation in the postcolonial context.

Key Differences in the Western and Indian Folklore Identity

- **Cultural Unity vs. Diversity**

European folklore often reflects the pursuit of cultural unity, emphasizing common linguistic and historical ties. The Brothers Grimm's collection of fairy tales exemplifies this, presenting a narrative of a shared Germanic identity. In contrast, Indian folklore embraces diversity, with a multitude of languages, religious traditions, and regional variations contributing to a rich and varied tapestry.

- **Indigenous Influences**

American folklore, shaped by the encounters between Indigenous, African, and European cultures, exhibits a unique blend of influences. Native American folklore, with its connection to nature and spiritual traditions, contrasts with the European-derived folk traditions that emerged during colonial periods. This syncretism is a defining feature of American folklore identity.

- **Syncretism and Religious Pluralism**

Indian folklore is deeply intertwined with religious pluralism, reflecting the coexistence of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and other traditions. Stories from the Ramayana may resonate in Hindu communities, while Sufi traditions contribute to the folklore of Muslim communities. This syncretic nature of Indian folklore distinguishes it

from the predominantly mono-religious influences found in European and American contexts.

- **Urbanization and Contemporary Folklore**

As urbanization and globalization reshape societies, contemporary folklore takes center stage. In America, urban legends, popular culture, and digital folklore contribute to a dynamic and evolving folklore identity. India, with its rapid urbanization, witnesses a similar transformation where traditional folk narratives coexist with urban legends and digital storytelling. European folklore, while embracing contemporary expressions, may still bear the imprint of historical rural traditions.

The identities of Indian, European, and American folklore are deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts. The romantic nationalism of European folklore, the postcolonial negotiations in Indian folklore, and the diverse cultural expressions in American folklore contribute to distinct identities. Past and modern theories, ranging from structuralism to postcolonial perspectives, offer lenses through which we can critically analyze the nuances of these identities. The cultural unity of Europe, the syncretism of India, and the hybridity of America reveal the multifaceted nature of folklore as a dynamic expression of human identity and experience. As we navigate the theoretical landscapes of folklore studies, it becomes evident that understanding these differences enriches our appreciation of the varied and intricate identities woven into the folkloric tapestries of these diverse societies.

Storied Spaces and the Construction of Saurashtra

The research unfolded nomenclated identity of Saurashtra veiled in the mist of legendary narratives. According to one Puranic account, "the revered King Anartta, who hailed from the lineage of Saryati and was the grandson of Manu, is said to have established his capital at Kushasthali or Dwarika in Saurashtra. This legendary tale suggests that Anartta's dominion extended to the region of Northern Gujarat as well. The succession continued with Anartta's son, Revata, who, in turn, saw his granddaughter Revati marrying Baldeva, a Yadava king from Dwarika. An intriguing twist in the narrative unfolds as Baldeva defeats his father-in-law, Raiveta, and ascends to the throne, prompting Raiveta to flee by sea".

Another Puranic legend "traces the Yadava family's lineage back to Yadu, with the thirty-seventh descendant being Satavahana, whose family gave birth to Vasudeva. The Yadavas, faced with the persistent attacks of Kansa, Kalyavana, and Jarasandha, eventually abandoned their old capital Mathura and settled in Dwarka. This change of capital was precipitated by external threats, and it is recounted that Kalayavana pursued Krishna to Saurashtra but met his demise at the hands of the sleeping sage Muchakunda".

Subsequent to this event, "the Yadavas, now residing in Dwarka, conquered Saurashtra from the demons who had previously held sway over the region. Notably, Baldeva and Krishna maintained a close alliance with their maternal aunt's sons, the Pandavas, who ruled from Hastinapur or Delhi. An episode unfolds where Krishna, absent in Hastinapur for the Rajasuya sacrifice hosted by the Pandavas' king Yudhisthir, faces an invasion led by the Salva king of Mrttikavali in Saubha. Despite the city being plundered, Krishna later retaliates, defeating and killing the Salva king upon his return to Dwarka" .

However, the Yadavas' triumph is short-lived, as internal family feuds erupt, leading to the rapid decline of their rule in Saurashtra, just thirty-six years after the Mahabharata war. The once-thriving city of Dwarka is said to have been engulfed by the sea as a consequence of their internal discord. These two intricate narratives thus weave together legendary tales, political alliances, and familial conflicts, shedding light on the complex historical and mythical landscape of Saurashtra laying the grounding of Meghani's objective of celebrating the region itself. This also exemplifies that literature that springs from the region, has been fraught with the notions that depict the quest for a separate and distinct identity, the anxieties of otherness, the desire to demarcate a space of one's own in cartographic terms leading to the creation of literature that emanates from this region of diversity; clubbed together for political convenience and tries to make a foray into the genre of mainstream Indian English literature. Just as these states cannot be clubbed under an umbrella term, (although it is done so for political convenience or as some kind of a geographical marker), it would be unjustified to club writings from the region under a single term- the experiences of a writer who has been born and brought up in the plains of Assam is different from those of a writer who has had her birth in the hills and then later had to move away from there to a different geographical location or it would be different from a writer who has been born in a clan which reveres the man-

nature relationship or a clan for which the lived biosphere attains far greater significance than political boundaries.

Jhaverchand Meghani sought to prevent Saurashtra's complete subsumption within the modern state of Gujarat through his writings and advocacy in several ways:

- **Preservation of Oral Traditions**

Meghani focused on the preservation of Saurashtra's oral traditions, folklore, and local histories, which he believed were fast disappearing due to the impact of modernization. By recovering and promoting these traditions, he sought to distinguish Saurashtra's cultural heritage from that of Gujarat and prevent its complete subsumption within the modern state.

- **Emphasis on Saurashtra's Uniqueness**

Meghani emphasized the uniqueness of Saurashtra's cultural practices, language, and history, which he believed set it apart from Gujarat. By highlighting these differences, he sought to prevent Saurashtra's complete assimilation into the wider Gujarat region.

- **Use of Kathiawadi Dialect**

Meghani used the Kathiawadi dialect in his writings, which was spoken in Saurashtra, to communicate the region's cultural expressions to the wider Gujarati-speaking audience. This approach helped to preserve Saurashtra's distinct linguistic identity and cultural heritage.

- **Advocacy for Saurashtra's Autonomy**

Meghani advocated for Saurashtra's unique identity within the wider Gujarat region, arguing that it should have its own administrative and political structures. This advocacy reflected his belief that Saurashtra's distinct cultural identity needed to be preserved and protected. Meghani's writings and advocacy sought to prevent Saurashtra's complete subsumption within the modern state of Gujarat by emphasizing its uniqueness, promoting its cultural heritage, and advocating for its autonomy. His work played a crucial role in shaping the regional identity of Saurashtra and contributed to the wider

trend of regional consciousness that emerged across India in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (Kapadia, 2021).

Space is relative; its meaning depends on the position the speaker occupies within space, in this research Saurashtra is not an autonomous space as such, but a system of relationships as experienced by the speaker, here Meghani. The project establishes that "Space is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the positing of things become possible (Maurice Merleau-Ponty)". Space is not an object with a definite shape and form; it is a process that evolves as a result of social practices and is defined by human thoughts and actions. "Space is never still or static; it is inherently dynamic. Space is a set of social relationships stretched out. Space is not singular and final. There are simultaneous multiplicities of spaces (Massey)". Space constitutes both the subjective and objective aspects of space. As a society's existence is contained within its conscious boundaries, it is characterised as inwardly homogeneous. Yet, as the space is continuous and it does not contain an objective border, it "permits us to lay down anywhere such a boundary subjectively. The spatial conceptions are formed in the minds of its inhabitants. Therefore, boundary is psychographic rather than geographic.

This project proposes the idea of digital spaces in the folk narratives of Jhaverchand Meghani, drawing Ong's theory of tertiary orality and the Schechner's theory of performativity. The capitalist economy with the policies of liberalization, privatization, and globalization paved the way for the idea of folk for the market, creating manufacturers, consumers and buyers of folk. The Indian crafts industry has long been recognized for its mastery for craftsmanship and innovative thinking. When exploring the folk narratives of Jhaverchand Meghani it was unfolded that in the present context of the digital media the folk narratives are present in the digital world. While Ong's theory primarily focuses on the transition from oral to literate cultures, it is now extended to the tertiary orality encompassing the contemporary digital realm. The digital space, akin to oral traditions, involves the transmission of narratives through non-textual means, utilizing multimedia elements and often relying on spoken or performative aspects. Ethnopreneurs capitalized on the folk in print, electronic, digital media, encashing on its vast reach, socio-economic and cultural impact, creating markets for folk music, folk art, folk culture and ethnic products.

The COVID 19 pandemic initiated performative and narrative interactions through digital platforms. Folk musicians have shared their stories with audiences through accessible technology. *Mehfil-e-Rajasthan*, a live podcast on audio streaming app *Mentza*, was built with the intention to restore the faith of artists to continue their age-old traditional music, which has allowed people to listen to authentic Rajasthani music from the comfort of their homes by keeping the roots alive. In fact, to restore the glorious treasures of folk culture in states like Assam and the Northeast, Mumbai-based organization has been working on archiving and scripting *Assamese folk songs and tales.* The project titled *Scripting, Research, Recreation, Digitalization and Archival of Lyrics of Folk Songs and Folk Tales of Assam* has been approved by the Union Ministry of Culture under the senior fellowship programme for the *Centre for Cultural Resources and Training.* The shift to tertiary orality, visuality and ethnopreneurship can also be observed where so many folk songs namely *Zulan Morali Vagi, Shivaji nu Halaradu, He Jode Rahejo Raj* (which is also widely used and sung in the festival of Navratri and even sung and performed in marriages), *Chando Ugyo Chowk Man, Kan Tari Morali Ae Ji Re, Ajara kai Jarya Na Jai, Ubhi Ubhi Ugamne Darbar, Kasumbi no Rang*, are transcribed into audio visuals and are widely available on YouTube. There are many different channels on YouTube where many Gujarati folk singers and artists perform and narrate different folk tales and folk songs of Jhaverchand Meghani every week and upload their videos, constantly juggling to revive the rich Gujarati folk culture and even generating income out of it. Mitesh Solanki, a Gujarati folk artist is working on converting a book named *Khumari and Khandani* of Jhaverchand Meghani into a comic based graphic novel, which will not only be a pictorial book, but would also contain meaning of difficult words from colloquial language used by the people in those days. He received this idea when he did not find any books of Jhaverchand Meghani even in the Gujarati bookstores of the state and thus thought of keeping the true cultural heritage of Saurashtra alive and to popularize them.

As the present generation is moving towards the era of visualization and digital archiving the folk cultures of different states of India, an emergence of new concept of Hypertext has also emerged. Hypertext is a method for organizing information that allows meaningful, non-linear access to text-oriented resources. Unlike traditional computer-based instruction and databases, hypertext systems allow the user to access information by jumping around through a series of electronic links, whether in encyclopedias,

textbooks, magazines, journals, databases, knowledge bases or other resources. The power of hypertext, from a technological perspective, is apparent. Information can be organized and reorganized in theoretically unlimited ways; access boundaries across traditional media can be overcome electronically as previously static information is linked and cross-referenced; individuals can generate and merge their own information with electronic data; and learners can proceed according to their own learning needs. Hypertextual elements, such as hyperlinks embedded within digital texts or multimedia content, allow readers and listeners to navigate through diverse layers of narratives, songs, and contextual information seamlessly. In digital platforms, Meghani's works are often presented alongside interactive maps, historical references, and audiovisual materials, providing readers with a multifaceted exploration of the cultural landscape he depicts. For instance, hyperlinks may lead to archival recordings of folk songs, photographs of traditional artifacts, or explanatory articles on regional customs, enriching the audience's understanding of the text.

Furthermore, the merchandising of Meghani's folk narratives and songs often incorporates hypertextual elements to create immersive experiences for consumers. For example, printed editions may include QR codes linking to online resources, while audio recordings may feature annotations with supplementary information accessible through mobile applications. These hypertextual enhancements not only augment the longevity and sustainability of the material but also cater to modern audiences accustomed to interactive digital media. Hypertext and the associated Ethnopreneurship in Jhaverchand Meghani's folk art and songs, whether in digital platforms or as merchandises, serve to construct, preserve and promote Saurashtra and its quintessential cultural heritage in the digital space while adapting to contemporary modes of consumption and engagement.

This research proposes the idea of digital space within the gamut of various spaces in the real and virtual world marks a significant evolution in how cultural narratives, such as those by Jhaverchand Meghani, are disseminated, consumed, and interacted with. Digital space, characterized by its dynamic and interactive nature, transcends the physical boundaries of traditional spaces, offering a multidimensional platform for the exploration and dissemination of cultural heritage. In the context of Meghani's folk narratives and songs, digital space provides an avenue for preserving and showcasing Saurashtra's rich cultural tapestry to a global audience. Within this digital realm, Meghani's works are not

confined to static pages or audio recordings but are instead embedded within a network of hyperlinks, multimedia elements, and interactive features. Users can navigate through layers of information, accessing archival recordings, visual representations, historical context, and scholarly analyses with ease. This interconnectivity fosters a deeper engagement with the material, enabling users to explore diverse perspectives and immerse themselves in the cultural landscape of Saurashtra, bridging the gap between the physical and digital realms, enriching the audience's experience and fostering a deeper appreciation for Saurashtra's folklore.

Thus, the emergence of digital space within the realm of cultural narratives represents a paradigm shift in how we perceive, interact with, and preserve cultural heritage. By leveraging the affordances of digital technology, Meghani's folk narratives and songs transcend the confines of traditional spaces, reaching new audiences and fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of Saurashtra's cultural identity.

Limitations of the Research

The limitation of this research is that it confines itself to the English translation of the folk narratives namely *A Noble Heritage, The Shade Crimson and A Ruby Shattered* respectively by Jhaverchand Meghani and does not encompass the entire spectrum of folk narratives composed by him. The topic still poses research possibilities in folk music, folk art and folk culture as this thesis only focuses on the above-mentioned literary work.

Scope of Further Research

The research paves way to explore the ways in which Meghani's stories have been received and interpreted over a period of time, particularly in relation to changing social and cultural contexts which can involve an analysis of how different generations have engaged with his narratives and how these narratives have been adapted and transformed in various forms of cultural expression, such as music, film and theatre. It would open arenas to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the storied spaces in the folk narratives of Jhaverchand Meghani, highlighting their complex and dynamic relationship to the historical, social, and cultural contexts in which they were produced and received.

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