Interviewing the self

**Researcher:** Meghāni uses the term ‘Sāhitya-ni Gangotree’ (the origin or source of literature) for folk literature quoting Kākā Kālelkar –

> “Whenever the poet’s genius got slow, his spirit got lost, the stream of education dried, the great persons of the country started penances approaching this ‘Gangotree’of folk literature.”

He also includes Shakespeare, Gothe, Wordsworth, etc. in the list of those geniuses. Even the great poet like Kālidās took the shelter of folk stories and folk tales in order to express his genius according to Meghāni.

Regarding the word ‘Folklore’ as the echo of the German words – ‘volksepos’, ‘volksfest’, or ‘volksleed’, Meghāni says that the sublime merit of folk literature is – inherent truthfulness – good or bad whatever happened, caused or thought go on flowing in new generations. There have been great deal of debate and discussions about the concept and growth of the words ‘folk’, ‘folklore’, ‘folk literature’, etc.

A Bengali Scholar gives the synonym folk culture for folklore. Dr. Hasu Yāgnik considers ‘folk’ as pertaining to social or cultural group of people and ‘folklore’ as the study of folk life as a whole and regards two main features of its flow or faculty – tradition and its currency in certain society. Some leading Gujarāti scholars agree as Dr. Balvant Jāni concludes –

> “Folklore is the lore of the people (folk), the field of folklore is as extensive as the meaning of the word ‘folk’. There has been the reflection of folk mind in the folklore beginning from the very old time. Folklore means the representation of folk art including every aspect concerned with human life.”

What would you say about these terms and their concepts nowadays?
Prof. J. K. Khumān: Actually folklore and then folk literature are simple, natural, down-to-earth phenomena with inherent beauty. The concepts you mentioned seem to be extensive including the important aspects but I think there are some definitions, formal conceptions, etc. that sometimes complicate the things rather than clarifying. In that case it seems it is better to smell the fragrance and behold the beauty of the flower rather than explaining as they may confuse some innate lovers of folk literature. However there are certain concepts which seem complicating and yet dealing with the natural thing informally. A folklorist of today, a Chāran himself, Takhatdān Rohadiyā, ‘Dān Alagāree’ who is very famous for his poem “Moj-mān rahevuv…re” conceptualizes folk literature in a strange way –

“When hearing with the ear whatever is seen, known and enjoyed gets presented by the mouth while the other limbs accompany vibrantly, we call it folk literature.”

Here, the Gujarati words seem very complicated, making it utterly difficult to translate the concept in English, and yet it deals with the fundamental ideas. Here, he perhaps challenges one to render the concept in any other language as if to symbolize the difficulty and problem of editing the oral tradition, converting the mouth-to-mouth tradition into written form.

Researcher: Together with its complicatedness the definition also adheres to the oral tradition and perhaps the distinction between the written and oral forms...

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Yes, in a sense.

Researcher: That is why perhaps the men of letters insist on distinguishing between folk literature and that of formal nature; some of them even keep away from folk literature, perhaps considering it inferior.

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Written word came afterwards in case of any type of literature. According to the pioneer in the field of folk songs Burger ‘poetry belongs not to the learning but people.’ He called the folk poetry (or say literature) as the school of all poets, of lyric and epic and considered popular (common) standards as the deciders of the best poetry.

The superiority or inferiority of any literature lies in its taste, interest and effectiveness. Therefore, the superiority of any type of literature depends
upon its quality, what R. J. Rees calls, the quality of permanance. As far as the distinguishing is concerned, I came across a nice analogy in a daily a few days ago, where a famous Rāmāyani Morāribāpu explains the difference between the folk literature and formal literature or literature in general referring to some scholar:

“When a plant is planted by man in the house or city, cared by water, manure, fencing etc. and creates the beauty by this formal care, it is formal literature, and one which comes out in the waste land without planting, water, manure, etc. and provides the natural beauty that attracts heart and mind, it is folk literature.” He gives the name ‘Ishta Sāhitya’ (Beloved/ Desired Literature) to folk literature saying “There is shlok (verse) in Shishta Sāhitya (formal literature) and Lok (folk) in Ishta Sāhitya.”

Researcher: An important concern about folk literature may be the change of dialect and language. Recently there has been an interesting statement made by a scholar during his lecture in a famous literary ceremony in Mahuvā, Gujarāt – “Adopting the governing methods of Britishers’ administration and making divisions (of states) on the basis of languages we destroyed the ‘Lok’ (folk).”

Prof. J. K. Khumān: ‘Dialect’ is the soul of ‘folk’ and the concerned literature, rather than language. There is a proverb – ‘Every twelve Gāu* the dialect gets changed’, not the language. But people got interested in the dialects of one another through the medium of this folk literature. There are examples of many works consisting of more than two or three dialects and consequently languages.

Researcher: Even the ‘Rāmcharitmānas’ of Tulsidās involves Avadhi, Vraj, Hindi and traces of some other languages.

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Yes, there is a great work of folklore believed to be the key resource of folk literature Pravin Sāgar (a wonderful love legend) which involves many dialects and cultural backgrounds. So there is no doubt about the impact of this new governing method – states with their own regional
languages; otherwise even if people used different dialects, the travelling from one dialect or language to another was more convenient.

**Researcher:** Its examples are found in the use of the Dingali language or the ‘dingal’ dialect in ‘Chārani’ literature especially in Duḥās and Chhandas, the poetic forms which serve as the heart of the tale.

**Prof. J. K. Khumān:** The whole Chārani literature is full of ‘Dingal’ or ‘Pingal’ which is the combination of Gujārāti, Rājasthāni and Hindi, originally as an elderly learned person of Rājasthān Bhanvarsinh Samor7 said that it was ‘Maru’ language of Mārvād region (Bhāshā meri Dingali). He also said that the language Grierson mentioned as central in the book of the study of our languages as OWR old western language was Rājasthāni- Maru Gurjar. He also considers our culture as expanded from Irān to Indonesia saying that the method of worship may be different, the culture remains the same, and giving the example the people belonging to Islam performing Rāmleelā in Indonesia. He gives many other examples too.

**Researcher:** As you mentioned Chārani literature – full of Dingal, what are its distinguishing features as there has been much controversy whether Meghāni’s tales are folktales or Chārani tales, apart from the disputes of their classification whether they are biographies, legends, historic tales or anecdotes? Why do you classify and recognize the type of Meghāni’s tales now?

**Prof. J. K. Khumān:** First I’d refer to the questions asked by a well known scholar of folklore Dr. Niranjan Rājyaguru —

“Why to call them Chārani tales or folk tales or legends or biographies today overlooking the importance of its substance that has stood the taste of time?”

Of course beginning from the distinct past the Chārani literature is actually the rich heritage of medieval era, upto twentieth century and even now. Here ‘Chārani’ may also involve the communities of Barot, Rāval, Mir, etc. apart

* Gāu or Gāv means approximately 2 miles; 3 kilometers.

from Chāran; I mean the communities doing the work of bards and minstrels. In Gujārāt and Rājasthān, may be in U.P. and M. P. too, the Chārans were dominating creators enjoying their special place in the court, in the ‘Diaro’ of
overlords, different rulers and kings rejoicing them with their lofty style of singing and telling. Mostly the Chārans of the small rulers, overlords produced much of the literature edited by Meghāni and it is in a sense of the nature of folk literature, wherein even common folk rejoice. As far as the features are concerned it is lofty in tone, rhyme and rhythm. We find it sweet, exquisite and enjoy it sometimes even without understanding the meaning. It is very difficult to render it in other languages, even in the formal language of the same region.

**Researcher:** One more striking thing of Chārani literature in particular, and Indian literature in general is the Rasa (literary means taste) theory that is what we call poetic sentiment. Actually there are nine Rasas — ‘Veer’ (paen) of valour and heroism; ‘Shrungār (love and amorousness), ‘Rudra’ (of terror), ‘Karunā’ (of pathos or mourning), etc.

**Prof. J. K. Khumān:** Mainly two or three Rasas especially ‘Veer’ and ‘Karunā’ Rasas dominate in Chārani literature. A folklorist and Chāran himself says:

“The distinctiveness of ‘Veer’ (paen) and ‘Bhakti’ – shānt (devotion – harmony) Ras is found in Chārani literature. The Chārani Ākhyāns (records) are so cleansed and inspiring that the father and a daughter, the brother and sister can enjoy sitting together. The compositions of this literature are historical with lofty kind of poetic element.”

**Researcher:** Yes, the particular thing about its Vāngmaya, as Upmanyu says, it is the word of that society wherein the task of the throat (say voice or sound) and the ear was not handed over to the eye. It is the word of ‘hearing cultural tradition’. Minimum two persons are inevitable there. ‘Lok’ (folk) is plural; while ‘Nāgarik’ (citizen) alone and singular. Moreover ours has become the eye-culture. When the people of this eye culture take over the lok vāni (folk tongue), captivate it, the original word becomes printed literature in that migration or handing over. Thus folk literature becomes twice born! Of two births! It has to be changed at in-laws! But the question arising here is — Did Meghāni obtain most of the material from the Chārani literature?
Prof. J. K. Khumān: Yes, it is true that most of the stories of ‘Rasdhār’ and ‘Bahārvatiyās’ are originally Chārani, the place where Meghāni found them as he himself says is the court of Darbār Vajsurvālā Sāheb of Hadālā, a learned vassal who used to gather the Chārans and Bārots – bards and minstrels. Even Meghāni’s style of ‘Māndani’ is also attained here.

But the whole credit does not go only to Chārani literature. Meghāni himself performed the tremendous task by filling the colour of eye-culture which is the aspect – very vital and most difficult to attain.

Researcher: How do you rate Meghāni’s contribution to folktales? Do you think Meghāni’s folktales are rare even if there has been much criticism and disagreement regarding the types, nature, style, subject, etc.?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: The folktale is an unflinching, never failing form of literature attracting the interest of all—from child to old people, of any corner of the world, and it is also said that its origin is as old as man’s curiosity and thirst for hearing about extraordinary occurrences and events. The most important feature is its mouth-to-mouth tradition, descending in generations to come. Meghāni himself has also discussed about the form of folk tale in the introduction of ‘Sorathi Bahārvatiyā’ I must refer the interesting statement by him—

“There is no criticism with rules of art to recognize.”

He uses the term, the ‘Chākadā-utār Ghāt’, means the mould or shape descending from the potter’s wheel, for folk literature.

Researcher: One renowned critic Vasudevsharan Agarwāl also goes the same way, saying that the plank of the folk tale is as vast and extensive as human life. It has not been trapped in any small circle or subject, not even in the differences of prose and verse. He adds:

“Man’s happiness and distress, love and coition, good character, prowess, pride, valour, obliging conduct, etc. elements have grown the folk tale being the manure; the ways and doings, worship and penances, religious customs, beliefs, mysteries, fancies, faith and superstitions have filled life in the folk tale.”
Prof. J. K. Khumān: Meghāni’s main contribution is that he has connected—united—both extremes the upper and the lower on literary and socio-cultural grounds through his efforts—in folk tales in particular and folk literature or say literature in general. According to Hasu Yāgnik his tales showed what vision charmed with humanity and valour was there even in the ordinary people believed to be the rustic, illiterate, and lower; they exhibited what unity was there in the regional public inspite of the diversity of race, (gender), caste and religion. And according to the popular Gujarāti thinker, educationist and author himself ‘Darshak’—Meghāni’s true penance was fulfilled in proving the wonderful fragrance of various colours of culture and virtues in the groups or communities whom we believe to be illiterate. He rightly says—

“The people of decent, higher classes realized that there were great merits in folk literature, there was no uselessness and from that realization the positive attitude got developed and both the classes came near. It was the historic consequence of Meghāni’s perseverance.” He adds further—

“The nation was divided into two halves; to bring them close, his literature especially the creation and finding of folk literature performed big role.”

Researcher: The former V.C. of the Bhāvnagar University, Prof. Vidyut Joshi praised Meghāni’s style but he is against giving social and historical significance to the stories of Bahārvatiyās. He asks the question—Why do Bahārvatiyās not exist today?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: The same question can also be asked about Mahātmā Gāndhi—why does Mahātmā Gāndhi not exist today?

Researcher: Seriously speaking, Mahatma Gandhi actually fought for the sake of the whole nation with the weapon of truth and non violence. Here Prof. Joshi raises the question while speaking on the subject concerned with sociology and literature.

Prof. J. K. Khumān: There you are. As Mahatma Gandhi also fought, in a sense he may be regarded as a Bahārvatiyā—the revolutionary. Yes, his weapons were different as he existed a century later, earlier there was no
such concept as non-violence. And the most important thing is circumstances—circumstances produced Mahātmā Gāndhi and circumstances produced the Bahārvatiyās too. As Meghāni says in his prologue—Bahārvatiyās continue to exist for generations—whenever tyranny prevails; whether it’s from church or state authority, the form may of course vary.

There are some people who are fond of going against the general concept or an established thing, sometimes to being different or attracting people’s attention—clapping—I mean for no serious reason at all. But such a man of letters, especially when he speaks on the topic of sociology and literature, shouldn’t utter such reckless and irresponsible statements—he must refer the background of the time, the society, the chaos prevailing especially during the whole 19th century when Britishers and big states were oppressing people, exploitation, looting, raping and all the things—what would he think about the people involved in the 1857 rebellion?

Secondly, as you mentioned the nature of his topic—sociology and literature together—Yes there is a branch of social science—Sociology of Literature, wherein sociological approach of literature is considered. The language reflects both the personality of the individual and the culture of his society and in turn, helps shape personality and culture.

**Researcher:** So the speaker must see these sociological aspects, let alone the literary ones?

**Prof. J. K. Khumān:** Most certainly. On one hand you observe the sociological aspect of literature and talk of overlooking such important things with socio cultural significance on the other?

**Researcher:** But there are two other persons also—Vishwanath Bhatt and Prabhudas Thakkar to go against—I mean Mr. Bhatt is only against the incidents of some individual Bahārvatiyās, otherwise he loves the strong individuality, fearlessness and selflessness of Bahārvatiyās and appreciates Meghāni for collecting the wonderful tales of history.

**Prof. J. K. Khumān:** Yes, there may be some short comings of editing but one thing I must refer is—the historical details are taken by Meghāni without almost any change—except some required things to pour taste and interest. He wrote in his letter to a learned Gujarāti B. K. Thakor about some allegations put by a woman about some folk songs edited by him—
“Every literature is produced on the canvas of social state prevailing in its time: The position of woman (here of anyone or anything) whether inferior or otherwise was not the crevice committed by folk literature. It was not the creation of folk literature. It was a bare fact to produce noble emotions and do poetic justice.”

The vast realm of folk literature has appeared to him to be a great redeemer, as he proceeds, and why do the high brows give only folk literature a bad name and beat it with the stick of their own inferiority complex?

Researcher: But Prabhudas Thakkar seems to be very aggressive towards the cruel acts, while considering the outlook of values—He uses the epigram ‘Kshamā Virasya Bhushanam’ two times against Meghāni’s depiction of Bahārvatiyās, especially of part-1.

Prof. J. K. Khumān: If you consider the point of view of value system, first you are to see the social, political or religious state prevailing during the time. There are some cruel Bahārvatiyās in first part and the motives of all of them may not be right but the practicces of the big powers, the lust for capitalism of some nobles, beaurocrates and traders and above all the Britishers were worse. Even European thinkers have expressed the social scenario. While considering the fact why the Chārans (bards) sing the praise of these brave men like the Bahārvatiyās Meghāni quotes the words of Sir Henry Newbolt—

“The social order which the ballad makers imagined for themselves was a chaotic and blood-stained life, but it was a noble choice between two sets of evils …… the life of peace and comfort is no doubt preferable, yet there is something to be said as an ideal for the ballad –life. With all its crimes and sorrows, it was a life of the spirit; it was full of generosity and sincerity and courage and above all its sad death in its right place—
It is but the giving out of a game
That all must lose.”
What did the forces and governors of those big kings and the British army do? Its real picture is found in the tale of Jodhā Mānek – Mulu Mānek. On the excuse of finding the Bahārvatiyās the forces, the governors, looted people not only of their wealth but of the character too. They were big looters many times, more than the Bahārvatiyās; they even brought disgrace to the women. They actually forced the brave men to be Bahārvatiyās, to have at least some control over the plight of the people and the exploitation that was reaching at the peak. Moreover as Meghāni writes, “Whether the back pages of the culture of my province or country are bright or pale we should try to read them as they are.”

One should not muke idle bragging about his culture that it is very old and great. The case is contrary to what Mr. Thakkar thinks here, Meghāni’s works are full of values. Researcher: And what of ‘Kshamā Virasya Bhushanam’ (Forgiveness is the ornament of a hero.)?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Of course. But of a hero, not of a shrewd politician, not of a coward or impotent man. For them it is compulsory. Is the principle not applicable to the big authorities – the tyrants? The Britishers? When you see your poor people getting exploited for no reason at all, when you find your women being disgraced, and you go on to forgive; then is it really heroism? Is it forgiveness or cowardiness? Even the one who witnesses the practice doesn’t deserve to be called a brave man.

In that case ‘Kshamā Virasya dushanam’ (To forgive becomes the evil act).

Researcher: What would you say when Mr. Thakkar asks Meghāni – why should the Bahārvatiyās be not regarded as robbers?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Meghāni has discussed a number of issues involved in the preface; he also considers our scales for heroism and for robbery too. As he says, what would you call the persons (the industrialist/ the trader) fleecing the laborours and poor persons to the bone? Collecting much fine and penalty? The tyrants? Were they robbers?

Secondly we are sometimes great imitators getting influenced by luxury, power and vanity. The English officials and the big authorities who suffered loses against Bahārvatiyās might regard them robbers and rogues and anything. Even they didn’t allow the lay man to talk about them. For
example, the incident of the Nāgar young man, a friend to Moolu had to tell a lie that he did not recognize the face of the dead body of Moolu Mānek in the tale, and if he did, he would have suffered a lot.

Researcher: Even Englishmen like Kincaid also praised the Bahārvatiyās of first rank, their valour, bravery, selflessness and character.

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Yes, and they never brought the wealth of the loot at their home. They looted on one hand and distributed on the other hand to the poor and needy. Besides, they themselves were the sons of the kings who were forced to leave their home and family for centuries, as Kincaid said, to get justice. May be the fourth type or some Bahārvatiyās looted for the sake of loot or material prospect. But they are not actually to be regarded as Bahārvatiyās. It is extremely reckless I would say to call these original Bahārvatiyās robbers. Thus, I call it recklessness.

Researcher: Prabhudas Thakkar also regards the much popular tale of Meghāni “Ghodi ane Ghodesavār” which is also translated in English as “The Mare and the Rider” selected in the top ten stories in the world renowned book, considered as the fine example of the folk tale, culture, etc. He regards it as Itihāsshunya (extremely lacking in historicity) and Itihāsshoonya ridicules the imagination in it too – The jump of the mare, her attempt to reach the precipice together with the canoe wherein the woman and her child remaining safe.

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Even the critic himself is not sure of what he wants to express – blaming for the sake of blaming seems to be his intention.

Researcher: How?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: On one hand he finds fault with historicity and wants to stick to historical standards, on the other he expects for good imagination. The tale is really a wonderful Chārani tale based on purely historical incident. Perhaps this learned man does not seem to have a least idea about the strength and virtues of good horses. Horses can perform Herculean tasks, they can be unbelievably loyal to their masters, and there are many such examples especially of the Kāthi Horse, a special breed of Kāthiyāwād. There are horses even today that can jump surprising heights; he might not have seen even horse races. Even the English man got wonderstruck beholding the horse.
**Researcher:** And, even if it is imaginative it deals with immense cultural significance. The wealth of the animals was the factor nourishing the sense of beauty, imagination, sentiment, and deep feeling according to Meghāni and the first place goes to their horses. There are many beautiful proverbs and idioms regarding this, e.g. ‘Bhal Ghodā, Kāthi bhalā, penidhak pe’rvesh’ [nice were the horses and so were Kāthis and their guise reaching up to the heel.]

**Prof. J. K. Khumān:** Yes, the horses were looked after very carefully. Some of them were called Devmuni (Divine) and Kāthi’s had extra ordinary harmony with them. The statement by Mr. Kincaid that the horse and the rider together formed an animal gives the evidence. They two cannot be separated. The Kāthi horse is regarded as the most elegant, wise and loyal breed. It actually solves the long-termed puzzle in Kincaid’s mind: From where did Greeks descend the stoned statues/ idols of the horses of the Parthenon standing for the ages in Greece? As there has been no such breed of horse found – unforeseen model as he thought, did the Greek sculptors created this elegance through imagination?

Then it is the violation of the rules of Greek sculpture as such violation was impossible in Hellenic Art. Then suddenly the solution was found, when once he happened to enter into the stable of a Kāthi Darbār; as he writes:

“I entered the stable-yard and in a minute or so two grooms led on before my wondering eyes a white stallion, the living facsimile of the horses that for two thousand years have so bravely pranced upon the stone whence they were called to life by the chisel of the Athenian.”

Then Kincaid comes to the conclusion with the evidences of anthropology and history.

**Researcher:** Not only anthropological, historical or cultural but these things also serve the background of every art – painting too. See what Rāmchandra Shukla feels –

“For our painters (artists) of course Meghāni have certainly opened a vast field. All the pages in the books ‘Rasdhār’ and ‘bahārvatiyās’ are standing
before brimming with variegated interest and sentiment, inviting the brush of the artists.”

Even if he belonged to Surat, the tales reminded him of the glory of Kāthiyāvād according to him, making him forget the life full of modern colours for some moments by those battle loving impossible looking vigorous men and women full of love and heorism. But the important question here is – Do you regard the literature by Meghāni flawless or perfect? Are there any short comings, for example of editing as Vishwanath Bhatt observes, particularly about the book Sorathi Bahārvatiyā Part-2?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Nothing made by man can be regarded perfectly, perfect and that is perhaps the reason for its beauty and liveliness, as the great mystic Osho said, ‘If anything (even in the case of God) is perfect than it is dead.’ There are and there must be some evident or inevident errors as far as the vast canvas of Meghāni’s all round literature is concerned, and Meghāni himself was aware as we discussed earlier.

Researcher: To point out the things Meghāni may have missed or mistaken in Sorathi Bahārvatiyā Part-2?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: The last tale in the book, as you know, Jesājee- Vejājee is the oldest, most of the material is of legends and in that sense it is certainly more a folk tale and it begins of course in the traditional oral form with the Duhās. Many incidents are without historical evidences, but the main one the Bahārvatā and its dates during the reign of Mohmad Begadā bear the evidences in themselves. There is also found much of an element of miracles, supernatural element, superstitions, faith and extreme penances, but they of course prove to be the guidelines for the regulations of Bahārvatās.

Researcher: Yes, according to some critics the incidents deal with the blind faith and too much of austerities, but they help read the folk mind and the social and religious scenario of the time, according to others.

Prof. J. K. Khumān: The second tale is the more recent one as far as the time of Jodhā Mānek- Mulu Mānek is concerned. Secondly there are some important historical details given by the well-known historian Bahgwānlāl. Thirdly there were still some men related directly or indirectly to the incidents and witnessed them too; when Meghāni wrote them. So they move very close to history.
The remarkable thing to be noted is Meghāni ends the glorious sketch of Jodhā’s life abruptly after the mammoth loot of Kodinār. But the material and details he received were actually scattered: Sometimes he uses the dialect of Okhāmandal which gives actually the regional touch, and he renders some of them in formal Gujarāti. But the other statements and dialogues of that dialect are not rendered and that becomes very difficult for a modern reader to comprehend. The same is true in case of the Duhās in all the tales when they are not rendered in formal Gujarāti.

**Researcher:** The tale of Jogidās Khumān is extremely wonderful and Meghāni himself has explained about his attempts for collecting the details of incidents, scrutinizing and then making the whole calevar.

**Prof. J. K. Khumān:** He no doubt tried hard and enlivened the events putting them in succession but here one thing to be noted is – this tale was extremely popular not only in Chārani literature but all over Gujarāt. And apart from Kincaid who also grew fond of this magnanimous character, two three other writers even before Meghāni had given the oral and written form to the incidents.

**Researcher:** Yes, the old writer Hargovind Trivedi and there are also audio cassettes of this famous story by the story-tellers like Darbār Punjāvālā, Kesubhāi Bārot, etc. The tale has also been picturized in Gujarāti and a new attempt towards it is in progress.

**Prof. J.K.Khumān:** The important thing is Meghāni did not include some events and incidents of and around the Bahārvatā of Jogidās, even some major ones, which the other writers have included. For example, the great exploits of Hādā Khumān, Jogidās’ father even before Jogidās began. The incident of Jogidās Khumān’s daring act of fetching the dead body of his elder brother Gelā Khumān from among the fully equipped cops of two- three divisions and other forces with loaded guns at the village near Bodi substation.

Moreover, the reference of Jogidās’ enmity to Nāgeshree village narrated by the Sandhi Jamādār at the end of the tale has no evidence and seems to be mistaken as it goes against the custom and tradition of the family.
Rese
Researcher: The incident of the killing of Patel Youngman and the wailing of his wife at Vijapadi may be true but no such case was found when the researcher tried to visit the place. It may be some nearby village and Meghāni may have heard it somewhere. But Jogidās Khumān was avowed not to loot a woman. It is possible that the woman may have arrived afterwards.

Prof. J. K. Khumān: And the remarkable incident of Jogidās Khumān’s adolescent son Mānsur Khumān who could survive his body by tightly fastening the cloth around his belly for hours after getting wounded by thr bullet of the enemy when the huge army was following and his consequent death at the old Khisari Kothā (fort) is not perhaps taken in any tales by the major writers. It is very interesting incident with the evidences. The head stone of Mānsur Khumān is still there under a tree at that dismal place in Geer and the ruin of the fort and the tree are still there as they were. And many people apart from the family and relations, even people of other communities, have deep faith on the divine power of the place as some mānatās (vows) are taken and fulfilled, e.g. for getting a son of a childless woman, even people living in big cities like Mumbai, Rājkot, etc. today, and they visit the place more.

Researcher: Can you tell any remarkable occurrence which is not in the tale?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: There is a place near Rājulā where a very small temple (Deri) is located. It is the palce of the ancestor of the Beparā Kshtriya community living in Vad village. His heirs are still proud as they believe that their ancestor has reached heaven for he was killed there by Jogidās Khumān like hero.

As a matter of fact the man was hiding on the way of Jogidās Khumān, fully prepared to kill him and desirous of taking the reward which was declared on Jogidās' head. Jogidā had no clue about it till he reached very close. The incident shows Jogidās’ divine strength or divine help to him, or because of his sixth sense he could perceive something as a danger and as the man was about to charge Jogidās’ bored him with his spear with extreme swiftness and moved away. Thus many such incidents are not included but one cannot at the same time cover everything especially after the gap of a generation or two.
Researcher: Any other comment regarding the shortcomings about the incidents included in the tale?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Yes, Meghāni gathered the material from a number of persons and scrutinized properly but he doesn’t seem to have visited the villages and the area of Jogidās Khumān, his brother and relatives, the bards maintaining the family records have not been contacted with due care.

Researcher: How can it be said?

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Its proof is the beginning of the tale. Instead of beginning traditionally with Duhās he begins with lively conversation and narration, okay it is the novelty in Meghāni’s style.

But to distinguish the character of Hādā Khumān he indicates the giving up and retreating of his brothers saying that the brothers drew back and they were waging their tales.

Researcher: I have also noted one thing about the rulers of Kundalā – Meghāni mentions the nine brothers, the grandsons of Sāmat Khumān, Hādā Khumān and his brothers but in reality they were only six. There are many evidences that have already been given in the foot-note of that chapter. And only the eldest Bhoj Khumān had some objections regarding the estate with his brothers.

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Yes, except the eldest who actually had developed good terms with the king of Bhāvnagar rest five were together. They began to resist under the second elder brother Mulu Khumān and only after his death Hādā Khumān being the eldest of the remaining four brothers took the responsibility on his head. And how can you say that the brothers gave up when the two of the three died while fighting against the soldiers of Bhāvnagar? The youngest Veerā Khumān rushed to rescue his brother Hādā Khumān soon on hearing the news of the army surrounding him and faced the army bravely near the place of his brother’s death. As the evidences, the headstones of the two are still there at the places where they faced the army bravely.

Thus the short comings are defiantly there but we are to take them positively considering the huge contribution of the author in comparatively so less a time. Apart from the protagonists and the events around them, according to some scholars, we can have immense advantage of the entropological and ethnological details. Rather than going negatively if we
consider the things at hand and keep the backgrounds of the time and circumstances in consideration, we can get different meanings, things of historical and socio-cultural significance in the dialogues, in the interaction, in the minor and major happenings around. Because the circumstances did not allow their full fledged and timely coming out, the new meanings and new interpretations are possible, considering the obstacles and referring the historical and socio-cultural scenario of the time. Then they will have immense role to play serving literary, historical and socio cultural perspectives of the past leading upto present that can be influential in future.

Researcher: You mean pragmatic approach can be useful? For example—

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Yes, it can serve for healthy literary, historical and cultural ends, sometimes going through the tales, keeping in mind the statements and backgrounds and fiding the new meanings and devices.

For example, there is a Duhā, as Duhās are not only the heart of the original tradition but key towards the solution and realization of excellent interpretation, in the tale “Jogidās Khumān” —

Samvant adhār panchotare farahariyā farangān,
Dhar Sorath Jogo dhani khobhaltal Khumān.

[In Eighteen seventy five of Vikram flourished the Firangān;
But the heroic king of Sorath land Jogā was magnanimous Khumān.]

[In 1875 of Vikram calendar, when Firangees (Britishers) descended in the land of Sorath (Saurāshtra), Jogidās Khumān remained standing and protecting the honour of the land.]

Here evey word and every ictus of the Duhā deal with significance, the first ictus provides the suggestion towards the time. Then the two words ‘Farhariyā’ and ‘Khobhaltal’ are striking.

Normally the word Farhariyā suggests that the Britishers bloomed but it indicates their full grown power and authority suggesting the fear and future danger. It also indicates towards the passiveness and submissiveness of the big kings and great leaders of the time.
But still there is one man who stands as the true lord of the land ‘Khobhaltal’ – literally ‘Khobhal’ means covering and ‘tal’ means so doing or doer of that. It means Jogidās proved to be the covering of the land of Sorath – the maintainer of the honour – the protector of values and virtues – even against the immense might of Britishers he held his head high, keeping up the credit of motherland, standing as the shield. Here the word Dhar means the land, it may also mean the bearer or keeper, the maintainer, and this way it indicates towards the belief of Jogidās being the incarnation of Laxman (the brother of lord Rām) who is originally the supreme cobra bearing the whole earth. Many more incidents and events, if interpreted properly and positively can serve towards the etymological ends referring such old words and expressions as ‘Khobhaltal’ and serve the ethics and inculcate value system too.

**Researcher:** Yes, going through the deeper meanings, sometimes indicating the suppression also may be very interesting. They may also lead to novelty as far as the interpretation is concerned.

**Prof. J. K. Khumān:** One old folklorist, a wonderful story-teller with his graceful style, Kānji Bhutā, the winner of the President’s Award in the field interpreted it very nicely: Why should Jogidās be regarded as the lord of the entire land of Saurāshtra? As he himself was the grandson of the king of Kundalā, only one small province, and to his share he might not have more than eight-ten villages. Secondly there were big kings like Nawāb of Junāgadh, kings of Bhāvnagar and Jāmnagar, Gāekwād etc. And Jogidās the lord!

Then the old man explains the incident of a young shepherd girl who once remained in the jungle for collecting wood and dung even after sunset, when it was very dark and scary. When Jogidās passes there with his men, he sees the beautiful young lady alone in the dismal place and asks – ‘Aren’t you afraid, woman? You should go home early.’ The woman didn’t actually recognize Jogidās but her answer is really fantastic. She said, “No, why should the ladies of the land where Jogidās moves on Bahārvatā be afraid?”

He narrates the second incident of the young lady obstructing Jogidās’ way begging for love and Jogidās calls her as his daughter and sister, with the indication that he remained ready to help any poor father for the marriage of
young daughters. The third incident is of the arbitration in the court of Bhavnagar – Both Jogidās and the king seated as the equal to the throne when Jogidās denies to call the hired dancing girls as low and degraded regarding them as the bodies of mothers, the women of his own family – that is why he was the lord of the Sorath – lord of the hearts of the people of Sorath!

**Researcher:** The last but not the least is the question of the historicity of the tales and the lack of some formal evidences; and yet their multiperspective significances. Meghāni himself has written: 'whose names should I discriminate form the numerous people rejoicing me at the peaks and ridges of every mount for seven years while collecting the heaps of historical materials of ‘Rasdhār’, ‘Sorathi Bahārvatiyā’, sages, etc. from their valleys?’ According to Dr. Yāgnik the stories are of course said to be history as the historical character of every village is standing in these collections – The legend can also be thought as an unwritten and undiscovered history.

Manubhāi Pancholi also considers the possibilities of the evidences – for example of the events in the tale of Jogidās Khumān in the genealogical records of Barots of the respective communities, even if there was the fear of big authority. He regrets the inattention towards that factor and complains ‘The population worshipped their history in the form of the head stone but did not keep it alive by means of knowledge.’

**Prof. J. K. Khumān:** To the same light there is a tribute to the martyrs and the poets inspiring them in Chārani literature: Geetadān rahashee, bheetadān jāshee bhāj

[The walls-stones will get broken in the course of time, but the songs will remain eternal.]^{20}

Thus the critics like Vidyut Joshi and Prabhudās Thakkar may criticize Meghāni on the pretext of historicity and values, but mere talking of values never serves for their inculcation. A Gujarāti scholar sees much extent of history in the tales as they are of near past emphasizing the most important facts of the social picture and social vision expressed in them; saying that modern history catches more historic element in the social life than the scattered occurrences.
Researcher: To this respect the comtemporary author to Meghāni R.V. Pāthak also says–

“Such stories are invaluable for knowledge of the folk nature, of which subjects the heart of the common folk melts, in understanding the facts of past history, and as historical reality at some places. But moreover in our weakened life of today, by means of these stories only new powerful emotions will come out. The human emotions of merits, valour, freedom of woman, etc. that we are talking about at present and yet they are not in our life as deep culture have been realized here in very strong and purely unmixed form ... without any vanity of ornamentation.”\textsuperscript{21}

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Even the foreign scholar like W.R. Gourlay has finely discriminated the role of this literature in historic al perspective in the Preface to ‘The Folk literature of Bengal’:

“The attempts to trace the sources of the tales have brought to light hidden knowledge. The history of the Indian people in these ancient days is but imperfectly known but the tales are a mirror of the customs and the thoughts of the people and as such they are of far greater value to us than the dates and the names of the few individuals – the dry bones of history.”\textsuperscript{22}

Researcher: Moreover, Meghāni gives a noteworthy example saying that the folk literature in which the face of old Saurashtra is minutely mirrored has done for it what its history cannot claim to have done. Referring to the incident when a renowned scholar of our country quoted an event of seven hundred years ago, not recorded in any of the chronicles of Gujarāt, but in Meghāni’s story based on a legend preserved by rote ['To protect a woman’s virtue” in A Noble Heritage] about the communal tension in India. Meghāni write:

“There are details that history, the male, does not care to preserve in his bales of records and which
folk literature, the female, picks up and tucks away
in her humble rags.”

Prof. J. K. Khumān: Yes, that is why Meghāni’s tales are immensely
important. I may not be objective, but I love them utterly as the people of Kāthiyāvād do.

SUMMING UP

To sum up, the researcher likes to point out the two important tributes
by two great men of literature themselves to Meghāni as he deserved to be
called not only ‘Sāhityakār’ (litterateur) but ‘Sanskrutikār’ (culturalist) also in
the words of Vijayrāj Vaidya who prescribes the common natural standards of
morality and sociology for the scaling of Meghāni’s literature. The tales by
Meghāni themselves prove everything standing the taste of time. What
Gourlay said about the Bengali folktales is perfectly true for Meghāni’s tales –

“The tales are a mirror of the customs and the
thoughts of the people and throw much light on the
history of the ancient days. A nation might well be
proud of these tales with all the attributes of a
beautiful lyric, containing a conception of purity
and lives which envince a high state of
civilization.”

Calling Meghāni as the symbol of folk literature Vasudevsharan
Agarwāl regarded him ‘Pruthviputra’ (the son of the earth) in real sense as the
seed like chant of ‘Atharavaved’ – “Mātā bhoomihi putroaham pruthivyaha.”
(The earth is the mother and I am its son) got fully well settled in Meghāni’s
mind. According to him the earth, men living on the earth and the culture of
the men – from these three streams the inspiration of his life was coming. He
says –The earth, man and culture – the life extended in this triangle is of
course ‘Lok’ (folk). He refers Ved Vyās –

“Pratyaxdarshee lokānām sarvadarshee bhavennarah.”

[Only the one who sees the folk with his own eye gets its full darshan
(vision)]. He remarks – “This face to face sight of folk is the key to its whole
vision, and Meghāni himself eye- witnessed this ‘Saxāt darshan’.”
According to Niranjan Bhagat Meghāni had no scripture or science for the search of folk literature – he had only love. Referring to Meghāni’s criticism about ‘Pragativād’ (evolution) he says, in our age both the words ‘Lok’ (folk) and Sāhitya (literature) have been spoilt in many a societies -- ‘Lok’ on the name of Lok and ‘literature’ on literature have been exploited. Regarding it as the wisest kind of exploitation he says, it should be noted that Meghāni has been exploited of course on the name of Meghāni. He observes:

“With the names ‘Lok’ and ‘literature’ on lips and the lust for the authority, fame in the heart – a number of players, leaders come wearing the mask of love towards ‘Lok’ and ‘Sāhitya’ and go. But the folk (public) recognize them in no time. It pleases them giving wealth, cajole them giving authority and fame but doesn’t give love. It gives love only to some rarity. Only the ones, who offer love, obtain it.”

He recalls Meghāni’s call: ‘Gujarat is of course in my heart’ and finds Meghāni in the heart of Gujarat, with two other great souls – Gandhiji to the left, Nhānālāl on the right side, Meghāni in the middle –

Gandhiji means ‘Lok’, Nhānālāl means Sāhitya, Meghāni is Lok Sāhitya.

Meghāni refers in his introduction to Saurāshtra-ni Rasdhār the poem “Charge of the Light Brigade” – Half a League! Half a league!

Half a League! Onward!

Into the valley of death

Rode the six hundred! – By Tennyson who got stirred by the feat of the six hundred soldier of English army rushing with naked swords against the huge Russian army equipped with formidable artillery arsenal. He composed the ode which resounds in the ear of every English student, and to date the recital of the ode inspires every British toddler to dedicate, to sacrifice according to Meghāni. And are we to give excuses on the name of non-violence and forgiveness and cruelty and morality?

As he writes in the preface –
The admirers of our history should not merely bask in the past glory but should decipher the call to courage rising from the folklore all over the earth and rejoice in the triumph of the universal love of the heroic. The sharpening of that appreciativeness will be the fulfillment of my effort. We abhor the parochial vanity that berates others. A proud past is of no value if it cannot herald a glorious morrow. May the heart of the youth of Saurāshtra swell with pride; may it swell large enough to be able to comprehend the towering strength of the universal expression of human spirit. Those enslaved by penurious mentality cannot attain the greatness that demands largesse to begin with.

That peak of dignity cannot be scaled by those unable to feel affinity with the earth under their feet. We shall earn the right to stand amid those representing great civilizations only after acquiring the ability to relate our folklore with that of the rest of the world. Only then we shall be able to proclaim with heads held high that heroic events comparable to those recorded in the annals of England, Greece and Rome had taken place in our native land too. Only then we shall be able to rightfully demand, not beg, that the glorious past of our land too be included in our students’ curriculum, for the youth engaged in the quest of knowledge and wisdom.

Years passed since the absolute departure of the magnanimous man and astonishing author Jhaverchand Meghāni, but people still recite his poetry and read his prose with deep love and touch of heart. If we endeavour to render and popularize the great treasures of Indian literature into international
language, I am sure; they would come out as the masterpieces of the world, in no way inferior to English classics.

Finally as the author gave a call to the thousands of youngmen studying in universities urging them to collect and represent the great heritage to the door of the universities and share its sublimity with the world, the present thesis attempts to move a step ahead in this direction. The researcher is sure of this first step towards the longlasting march of ‘binding the greatest distances together’, as Meghāni persisted that wide distances are spanned by the far- reach of folklore’s human touch, would also prove to be the vital step towards the advancement and enhancing of literature and further research.