Chapter – 3

Life and Works of Jhaverchand Meghani
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‘Hu pahad nu balak’. (I am the child of mountain) - Jhaverchand Meghani.

In 1918, in the shadow of the Russian revolution and during the advent of the Gandhian Era, a freshly graduated Gujarati young man migrated to Kolkata and found work in aluminum factory. For three years, he earnestly engrossed in diligent work. In his spare moments, he soaked himself in the torrents of the literary renaissance sweeping Bengal. He learnt Bengali, came under the direct influence of great litterateurs like Tagore and Dwijendra and institutions like Brahmosamaj. The impact of folklore on the Bengali intellectuals fascinated him and made him wonder about the possibilities of exploring the rich folk-literature of his native region Saurashtra, in his own words ‘a peninsula of hoary antiquity on the westernmost shores of India’. Unable to contain his zeal, one morning he handed in his papers of resignation to the owner of aluminum factory and bought a ticket back to Kathiawar, the region presently known as Saurashtra. This maestro was Jhaverchand Kalidas Meghani (1896-1947) he was felicitated with the dignified title of Rashtriya Shayaar, a poet manifesting nationalism.

He was born in the Baniya caste at Chotila on 28th August 1896. The native village of author’s forbearers was Bagasara of Bhayani clan in Amreli district. His parents were father Kalidas Meghani and mother Dholiben Meghani. By profession, Meghani’s father was a junior officer of Kathiawad Agency police force. The British administration in India formally assumed sovereign rights over the principedoms of Kathiawar land and set up its headquarters in Rajkot city in 1820. The seed of the mountain culture in Meghani was nurtured all along the intervening period because his father was frequently transferred from one outpost to another. Due to frequent transfer of his father, he studied at various schools of multiple cities like Rajkot, Bagasra, and
Amreli etc. His bond with Nature became stronger as his father’s posting was most probably at forest or mountain as well as cataract surrounded zone. Meghani’s statement: ‘hu pahad nu balak chhu’ (I am the child of mountain) is quite appropriate because right from the childhood; the deep pools of the rivers that penetrated the granite rocks flowed through the solitary canyons of the range were childhood companions of the author. The eerie hoo...hoo... blasts of howling gales gusting through the windows of Jhaverchand Meghani used to startle him awake and breathed into his soul as the call of the mountains.

As a child, he was an ardent admirer of the duha- battles raging between young cowherds or between aged farmers. Like all mountain creatures, he feasted on the duha-soratha poetry as ravishingly as he relished Banyan figs and wild berries and other exotic dry fruit products of the mountains. During the childhood Meghani acquired popularity as Villapi because he was writing sad songs. Mainly there were the two factors, which inspired him to sing and write sad songs:

1. He used to read sad songs contributed by Kalapi so Meghani became sensitive towards melancholic subjects which he naturally expressed in his writings of songs.

2. Mother’s inspiration - Mother Dholi ben’s lamentations used to fill entire atmosphere with sadness. Meghani shared this quality with his mother. He often penned many sad songs and earned pen name ‘Villapi’

Meghani passed his matriculation in 1912 and acquired B.A., degree with the English subject in 1916. He served as a part time teacher at ‘Sanatan Dharma High school’, Bhavnagar. His wish to pursue M.A. remained unfulfilled as he rushed to Kolkata in search of job due to his elder brother’s illness. He gave up his job as a teacher at Bhavnagar. At Kolkata, he joined Jivanlal’s Aluminum factory as a personal secretary. His quest for literature became intense due to his close study of Bengali literature. The study of Bengali literature stirred him to undertake the research of literature of Saurashtra
by returning to his native land. One can sense Meghani’s ardent desire to return to his native Saurashtra in the following letter written to his friend:

It is getting dark. It is time for cows to return. Animals also come back from the forest. Sonorous voice of their harness bell sounds. Bronze plate of temple also rings. I will come back as soon as I will get bored with experience of this drudgery and mechanic type of life. I will also come back during the evening of my life. My master summons me. I will not miss the real path of my life. I recognize its call. Let me tell that I am not alone in lack of company. (Likhiten Hu Avu Chhu 94)

At the end of the letter to express joy, eagerness, and excitement for his return to literature he signed in a very innovative style- ‘likhiten hu avu chhu.’(I am coming back.)

Driven by impulse to return to native, he came back to Bagsara by leaving his bright career in Kolkatta. In the beginning, Meghani fumbled in vain to get stability in his desirable career. During this crucial period certain decisive events occurred that were to shape his future. These are discussed as under.

1. Motivation by Vajsurwala

During the many intervening years, Meghani imbibed many a different literary culture; he did not know that the streams of delectable folk-delight had kept simmering in his innermost. In 1922, he met the one who could perceive those undercurrents. He was no one but Vajsurwala a childhood crony of Kalapi and a motivator and friend of Meghani. Vajsurwala was literati from Hadana. Vajsurwala and Meghani’s bond became stronger after Meghani’s return from kolkatta. Durbar Shree Vajsur wala was influenced by middle-aged society as well as trained under the thought process of theosophy; motivated Meghani towards Folk literature. Vajsurwala
was fond of telling stories to Meghani in spell bounding voice. Vajsurwala made deliberate as well as personal efforts to invite Charan and brought ‘ravno’ to inspire Meghani. Daughters of ‘durbar’, used to sing marriage songs for Meghani. Thus, all these events spurred Meghani to delve deep in the study of folk literature.

2. Meghani’s Marriage and tour with his wife

During this period, another significant event was Meghani’s marriage with Damyantiben. She belonged to a very cultured family. On the day of the marriage at the request of all friends Meghani sung ‘Chalo Dadaji na Desh ma’ in his sonorous voice in the presence of his wife Damyantiben.

The third significant event in Meghani’s life was his journey soon after his marriage at various places with his wife Damyantiben and the family of Gulabchandbhai. This joyous family tour inspired him to pen creative works of literature namely, ‘Moti ni Dhagliyo’, ‘Amar Rasa ni Pyaliyo’, and ‘Choro no pokar’. He sent his creative writes up’ Choro no Pokar’ for publication at some auspicious moment. Amritlal Seth the editor of ‘Saurasthra’ was impressed by reading this article. It was soon published in the weekly magazine, ‘Saurashtra’.

3. Beginning of desired career and creative use of weekends

Thinking of the rich folk literature of Saurashtra, Meghani’s soul cried out. Unable to ignore the call to pursue literature; he returned from Kolkata to his native land in 1921. Meghani sent two-three treatises to Amritlal Seth to get them published in ‘Saurashtra’. Amritlal Seth was fully amazed on reading Meghani’s scholastic and
touching articles. Amritlal Seth got glimpses of Meghani’s tremendous energy as a writer of Literature. On recognizing Meghani’s talent as an illustrious writer, Amritlal Seth invited Meghani to give his service as a man of literature by joining the group of editors of the weekly named ‘Saurashtra. Meghani gave his consent by joining as an editor. The commencement of the publications of Meghani’s writing happened soon by joining the newspaper ’Saurashtra. The first book of the author that was published was his translation of Tagore’s ‘Katha O Kahani’ and very soon the first volume of Saurashtra Ni Rasdhar found publication. Later on the chain of his research works of Soarthi Sahitya consistently continued. Remaining volumes of Saurashtra ni Rasdhar, Radhiysali Raat, Chundi, Soarthi Baharvatiya, Halarda, Soarthi Santo, Dadaji ni vato etc were published. Amritlal Seth found talent in Meghani and he provided full facilities to ignite Meghani’s passion for literature. Due to comfortable arrangements made by Amritlal Seth; Meghani’s latent talent of creativity bloomed to its peak.

Here he got ample opportunity to read and learn. There were very small but rich libraries in ‘Saurashtra’. He had to prepare all his write-ups by referring reference works offered by these libraries. The consistent usage of library books exposed him to the best literature of the world.

Meghani had an off for three days in a week i.e. Friday Saturday and Sunday. He utilized the slack interval of three days between the editions every week by travelling in search of the folklore and the oral traditions of Saurashtra. The consequence of this journey for research was creation and publication of Saurashtra ni Rasdhar,’ Misar no Mukti Sangram’, ‘Hungeri no Taranhar’. In 1932, Meghani and
his friend started’ Fulchhab’, the news paper related to literature. After certain period, he left ‘Fulchhab’ as it got coloured with the politics of the time.

In 1934, Amritlal Seth started the daily named ‘Janmabhumi’ Meghani joined the daily magazine Janmabhumi. In this daily paper there was one column of literature titled as Kalam and Kitab. The editorial responsibility of this column of literature named Kalam and Kitab was allotted to Jhaverchand Meghani. It was the beginning of his adeptness as a critical appreciator of literature. He started to write independent novels titled as Niranjan, Sorath Tara Vehta Pani Etc. The stories of Sheni and Vijanand, Ladakvayo, Tane Aavdi lalap etc he got it dubbed in cassettes in his majestic voice. In 1936, Meghani accepted the responsibility of editorial ship of weekly Fulchaab related to literature. This task of editorial ship of Fulchaab gave glimpses of Meghani’s new skill of writing. Due to noticeable impression of his new method of writing as a journalist; he started to contribute social novels namely Vevishal, Tulsi Kyaro etc. He also penned historical novels like Samragan, Ra’ ganga jaliyo etc. In 1945 he gave up his service of writing in Fulchaab and willingly took retirement after 23 years of his service to journalism.

4. Role of Dheli ben

His love for folk songs stimulated by mer woman Dheli ben. She inspired Meghani to study folk songs. Meghani yeared to hear live raas of mer community sung by mer women. He made many efforts to find any mer woman who could sing songs to him. Ultimately, Dheli ben fulfilled Meghani’s desire by singing songs. Dheli ben was an inhabitant of Bagvadar in Porbandar district. Neglecting their
tiredness due to day and night hard work in the farm; both husband and wife remained awake during one whole night to quench Meghani’s cravings to listen *Mer Raas*. Dheli ben continuously sang Gujarati *raas* while Meghani went on jotting down songs in the dim light of lantern. Dheli Ben’s husband sat beside the two to inspire Art. All the three sat whole night in the open corridor during one chill cold night.

Inspiring factors that boosted Meghani’s career are as under.

a) **Recollections of the days spent in Rajkot**

Rajkot was the most endeared city for Meghani because his childhood was spent in Rajkot. Meghani’s emotional bond with the Rajkot was very strong because the important days of his childhood from the age of 2 years to eight years were spent in Rajkot. To Meghani Rajkot was his birth place because no memories lingered in his mind regarding his childhood before his arrival to Rajkot. The dawn of his sensible childhood period occurred at Rajkot. Meghani began his schooling career by joining formal school named Taluka School of Sadar in Rajkot. On the first day he went to school by carrying coconut in his hands. Throughout his life Meghani remembered *deep mala* of Jubilee, the cricket played on the ground of Jim khana and the prince Lakahajiraj of Rajkot. The personality of the Souter (who had been mentor of the author’s father, also a junior grade police official in the Agency police) was much remembered by Meghani. The most favorite character of Meghani when he was four year old was Souter sahib. The photograph of Souter Sahib was hung on the wall of Meghani’s house for almost thirty years in the house. Meghani in the article, ‘*Hu
pahad nu balak’, writes: ‘As long as I remember my father, the Souter cannot be forgotten by me.’ Dignities, self respect, audacity to undertake any venture, dauntless spirit to face any disaster were the attributes of Souter. Meghani wrote his novel Sorath Tara Vehta Pani, on being inspired by the whole group of Sepoys, Foujdars and Thandars (police sub-inspectors) of the Police outposts of his time. The Sorath Tara Vehta Pani is the lengthiest novel by Meghani. In this novel he has depicted the character of Souter. The author has documented his memories of Rajkot through various events of the novel. In his article ‘Hu Pahaad Nu Balak’ Maghani wrote; ‘I have noticed that since long in spite of facing tyrannies, the soul of Rajkot has throbbed with vitality and always pined for Art and Beauty.’

b) Influence of his birthplace Chotila

Meghani’s birthplace was Chotila, a town situated in the heart of Paanchal region that has a topographical formation of vermilion-hued rocky soil. The author was born in a police outpost that was dreaded by the police constabulary as a bleak exile. It was situated in the foothill of mount Chotila, a hill believed to be the abode of Mother Goddess Chamunda. Writing about the influence of his birth place Meghani states:

One great influencing factor on me was my birth place… ‘Chotila’, Chotila is the mountain region. I was born at the foot of mountain. In my childhood, my siblings used to carry me around the mountain. Later on, I saw Panchaal district after 30 years but during my visit; I felt that my spirit was mountain spirit. I am thankful to my birth place for inculcating mountain spirit in me. (Meghani Vivechna Sandoh 3)
c) Meghani’s bond with the nation

Significant factor behind Meghani’s creation of literature was his love for Nation. He bestowed qualities of valor in his folk tales. He also set an example of bold journalism by his writing. He contributed national poems governed by natural emotions felt during national movement. Due to his participation in national movements; Meghani was imprisoned in jail. During his confinement Meghani came in contact with great-minded people like Shree Mahadev bhai Desai and Dr. Hariprasad Desai. Jhaverchand Meghani was a bard in its true sense, and became a legend during his lifetime. As a sensitive nationalist poet, he inspired his generation with his soul stirring patriotic poems. After Gandhi’s historic Dandi March, Meghani’s, collection of poems titled Sindhudo was banned by the British Government because it was powerful to stir spirit of nationalism of people. In 1929, when Gandhiji was pondering if it was worth an effort to go to London to participate in the parleys at the Round Table Conference offered by the British, Meghani wrote a poem, Chello Katoro aa jher no pee jaje Bapu. It alluded to the feat of Lord Shiva in drinking the poison churned out of the ocean by Devas and Danavas. On reading the poem, Gandhiji had said that the poet had managed to penetrate his conscience and correctly read his dilemma. So profound was the impact of Meghani’s works on the minds of the young generation that Gandhiji described the author as Rashtriya Shayar, a poet of nationalism. The best fact of Meghani as a National poet was that he did not merely focus on splendor of India but also threw light of drawbacks of the nation.
d) Re-marriage

In 1933, his first wife committed suicide; because of which Meghani had undergone severe mental strokes. He was compelled to migrate. Later on, he settled at Mumbai and there he developed new vision. In 1934, he re-married Nepali widow. During this period, he developed soft corner for pain-ridden people. In 1943, as the part of Thakkar Vasanji Madhavji Vyakhyanmala’ he imparted five lectures on the topic ‘Lok sahitya nu samalochhan’ at the auditorium which was overcrowded with audience. In 1946, he received ‘Mahida Paritoshik’ for ‘Maansaai naa Diva’ (Earthen Lamps) an award winning work. During the same year, he accomplished the honor as president of literature section at Literature assembly of Rajkot.

Glimpses of Meghani’s works in chronological order:-

During his life span, the first two and half decades passed without any significant creation in literature from his side. In addition to his works in the field of folk literature he gave fourteen novels; one of them unfinished, nine collections of poems, twelve of short- stories, four of plays, ten of biographies and sixteen of historical themes. He was in his fifty-first year when he died on the 9th March 1947. The second half period of 25 years was extremely prolific regarding his contribution in literature. His literary career ranged between 1922 and 1947. About a hundred books were contributed during the quarter century of diligence and perseverance, a lifelong endeavor of exploration, compilation and creativity. The following five factors lent unique touch to Meghani’s creative skill.

i. Folk literature
Folk literature

During the span of his service as a literary editor of a weekly named Saurashtra; Meghani used to get three days holidays every week. The poet Meghani utilized these three days weekend holidays by travelling in search of the folklore and the oral traditions of Saurashtra. Trudging on the trails snaking through the wilderness, riding horses, camels and bullock-carts, chugging on tardy narrow-gauge trains and sailing on country carts, he sought out Charan bards and Bhaat balladeers, Bharathari Bhajan singers and Turi story tellers, and developed contact with the women-folk of various communities. By his modesty and affable nature he charmed them into keenly sharing with him their oral heritage that lingered by rote. He copied down, compiled, waited patiently at times for many years for varied versions, did comparative studies and edited his hard-earned bounties. The fruits of this meticulousness were published in sixteen volumes of folk tales including short stories based on the folk literature of Saurashtra and ten volumes of folk-songs.

The folktales

1. **Doshimaa Ni Vaato** [Granny’s Tales] published in 1923. The anthology of *Doshimaa Ni Vaato* contained 15 stories; it was designed especially for teenagers. In 1946 at the
time of publication of the seventh edition of *Doshimaa Ni Vaato*; Jhaverchand Meghani’s elder son pointed out the morbidity in the stories of *Doshimaa Ni Vaato* to Jhaverchand Meghani and questioned its relevance for teen agers. Accepting the valid suggestion of Mahendra Meghani; Jhaverchand Meghani cancelled the anthology of *Doshimaa Ni Vaato* and could not give again the improved edition of *Doshimaa Ni Vaato*. In 1954 during the publication of a new edition of *Daadajee Ni Vaato* [Grandpa’s Tales] Mahendra Meghani studied again the cancelled 15 stories of *Doshimaa Ni Vaato*. After scrutinizing 15 stories of *Doshimaa Ni Vaato*; Mahendra Meghani felt to preserve 5 stories and added the stories of *Doshimaa Ni Vaato* with the other stories under the title of *Daadajee Ni Vato*. Thus, *Doshimaa Ni Vaato* no longer remained as an independent anthology.

2. In Gujarati newspaper as well as in book form by the title *Saurashtra nee Rasdhar* [Saurashtra’s streaking Nectar] about a hundred of the stories were published during 1923-1927. The stories cast deep influence on the upbringing of an entire generation of Gujarat during the Gandhian era and imbued with what the author regarded as eternal and universal values. The volumes have been reprinted many a time, have become an inevitable part of libraries as well as home collections, and are on the front shelves of bookshops in the region even today, after eight decades since they were first published. Vols.1-5, of *Saurashtra Nee Rasdhar* comprise love legends of saurashtra in balladry form, some of the stories are based on the folk tradition of story-telling where as few stories are written on the basis of the *duha* verses he had unearthed during his research. In this collection, stories project various shades of emotions chiefly love, hatred, fraternity, revenge, treachery, generosity etc.
3. Between 1927 to 1928 Vols.1-3 of *Sorathi Bahaarvatiyaa* [outlaws of Saurashtra] were published. In these folktales, there are stories about various outlaws namely Vir Ramvala, Jogidas Khuman, Bhima Jat, Champraj Vala, Vala Namori and Mulu Manek. The stories of outlaws of Saurashtra are not based on mythology but they are supported by the history of outlaws of Saurashtra. To supplement authenticity of stories about outlaws’; information have been taken from Histories, relatives of outlaws as well as department of police. Apart from all these elements, Meghani has encapsulated each story with the coating of imagination.

4. *Daadajee Ni Vaato* [Grandpa’s Tales] was published in 1927. It contains five stories. The stories of the anthology of Grandpa’s Tales not only appeal to curiosity of children but even adults also appreciate as the elements of valor, wonder that prevail in the stories.

5. *Kankavati* is a collection of 45 *vrat kathas* published in 1927. The original term of *Kankavati* is *Kumkumvati*. *Kumkavati* is one type of small box always sculpted or designed beautifully containing vermillion used in all auspicious occasions as well as spiritual rites. In this anthology all the stories deal with the ritual vows observed by women of Gujarat during twelve months of a year, they are religious in tone and totally different from *Shastriya vrat or traditional vrat kathas* as mentioned in the massive volume of *Vratraj*.

6. The anthology, *Raang Chhe Barot* is a collection of 12 stories published in 1945. *Raang Chhe Barot is rup katha/ adbhut katha* (fairy tales). It mesmerizes children by presenting a chain of marveling incidents. At the same time all the stories are
enamored by the readers of all age groups because the stories projects heroic deeds of
a historical heroic King Vikram of Ujjain. It is an illuminating and informative piece
of literature as it gives detailed explanations of 14 skills and four types of women.

Folk-Lyrics

1. Radhiyaali Raat (Enchanting Moonlit Nights] is a collection of Raas-Garaba songs

   published in 1928-1929.

3. Haalarda [Lullabies] published in 1929. Many lullabies from this collection are very
   popular and they are hummed by many mothers and Grannies of Gujarat even today
   while rocking the cradles of their babies for example: - ‘Tame mara dev na didhel
   Chho, vali paccha mangi lidhel chho…. ’ [You are god gifted and even I also prayed
and wished to get a baby like you], this melodious lullaby often rings in many Hindi
   television serials and also in Gujarati films even in the present time. Another famous
   lullaby which is at the tip of the tongue of Guajarati and also the famous lyric of
   social films and social serials is, ‘Dikro maaro Laadakvaayio Dev no didhel chhe,
   Vaira jara dhima vajo nind ma podhel chhe [My son is very darling to me and he is
   gifted to me by God. Oh wind you please blow gently so that you cannot disturb my
   son’s sound sleep.] Another historically famous lullaby by Meghani is ‘Shivaji ne
   Nindru na ave Maata Jiji bai julave…. ’ [This lullaby projects the famous historical
   personality of Shivaji a very brave, noble and heroic personality and the son of
   equally noble hearted woman Jiji bai an epitome of ideals and virtues.]

5. *Sorathi Geet Kathao* (Sorathi ballads) published in 1931, contains tragic ending love stories namely *Meh Ujli*, and *Sheni Vijnand*.


**Research and Criticism of Folk Literature**

Meghani laid the foundation for the exposition, research and interpretation of folk literature by contributing the following research works.

1. *Lok-Saahitya-1* Folk-literature Vol.1 published in 1939 covers Meghani’s research on folk literature.

2. *Lok-Saahitya- Pagdandi- path* [folk-literature-A Foot Track] was published in 1942.


4. Folk literature-*Dharati –nun Dhaavan* (The Breast-Feed from the Earth: Folk literature] published in two vols. in 1939, 1944 ‘. Meghani’s work on the magazine ‘Saurashtra’, gave him an opportunity for research and the result was *’Dharati nun Dhaavan’. It contains introductions as well compositions of editor/compiler.*
5. *Lok- Saahitya-nun Samaalochan* (A Review of Folk-Literature) published in 1946 is compilations of his lectures on folk-literature at academic level (MUMBAI University, Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Gujarat Vernacular Society, Shantiniketan etc.)

6. Meghani laid bare the travelogues of his journeys in the quest for Saurashtra’s folklore in *Saurashtra- naan Khandero maan* (Amid the Ruins of Saurashtra) in 1928 and *Sorath ne Teere Teere* [along the Seacoast of Saurashtra] in 1933.

In *Parakamma*, [The Circumambulation] in 1946 and *Chhellun Prayaan* [The Final Departure] in 1947 he re-traced his journeys to the sources of his research through bits and pieces from the journals which he had maintained meticulously during his arduous treks.

**Poetry**

Meghani’s inborn poetic intuition was nurtured by his intimation with nature right from his birth. Impressions of duha- soratha poetry which he relished since his childhood, fascination for Kalapi’s poetry bubbling with spontaneous emotions, acquaintance with bawl- Bhajans (religious songs sung in Bengali style), acquaintance and reading of poetry of Rabindranath Tagore the poet-laureate of India, his sincere and dedicated involvement in the research of folk literature after his return to Saurashtra and many other factors molded mind of Meghani with poetic sensibility.

At the age of twelve, Meghani penned the first poetry regarding the theme of the spirit of charity of Chinmayanjaji. In 1916, at the occasion of the New Year celebration the poet composed three stanzas of meteoric poetry. The poetry is based on Shikharni
Chhand (Shikharni is that type of meteoric composition that while singing gradually one has to sing it in such a high pitched note as if climbing one is climbing mountain step by step and finally touching the summit of the mountain).

Motif oriented poetry of Meghani stand apart due to its recital and melodious qualities. *Veni na fuul* (The garland or hair band made of Flowers) published in 1923 is Meghani’s first collection of songs. In the first edition there were 32 songs and in the second new edition the poet added 10 more poetry, so the new collection became of 42 poems. In this collection, in several poems the impressions of Bengali, English, Japanese poetry are captured. In these 42 poems the poem titled as, *Dadaji na Desh ma* (In the country of Grand Pa) visualizes imaginary dream world which lingers in children’s mind, the poem entitled as, *Talwaaro no Vaarasdaaar* (Inheritor of Swords) inculcates the spirit of chivalry in teenagers, another song in *Charani* style narrates audacity of a 14years teenaged *Charan kaniya* (the daughter of Charan) fighting against lion, the poem *Aavjo Vahali Baa* (Please come dear Mother), transformed on the basis of Rabindranath poetry; presents the melancholic song voicing the pangs of a agonized child battling against Death.

*Keellol* (Cries of Joy) is the collection of songs corresponding with the collection *Veni na Fuul*. It was published in 1930. 25 songs of this collection are worth enjoyable by children and in most of the poems of this collection the theme is either children centered or related to various notion and emotions of childhood. Affectionate bond between mother and child is the key note tone of the theme. *Chuundi*, Halo Galuda Ramadva Jee, Shivajinu Halardu, Sonla Sungho, Aashadhi Saanj and many others have become till today are admired and approved by all.
Yug Vandana (1935) (Prayer for the Era) - It is the renowned collection of poetry enamored by public to that extent that it bestowed Meghani with the most honorable title of Rashtriya Shaayar (national poet). Meghani is the only poet of the Gandhi Yug whose creative works alike the works of poet Kalapi and the poet Nanhalal of Pandit Yug, have moved the hearts of the people of all age groups. The main cause of laurels that Meghani accomplished is his dedication to the age in which he lived. The title of the poem itself denotes that it is inspired not by any celebrated or an illustrious work but it is stimulated by the prevalent factors of his age. The poems of Yug Vandana are divided into five sections. In the first section of Yug Vandana there are 24 national songs. Veer and Karuna Rasa are the kernel elements of most of the poems of this collection. These poems have been designed in the folk and Charani style. The another celebrated poem of this collection without its singing even today folk or cultural programs in Gujarat leave the impression of incomplete is: Lagyo Kasumbi no Rang; Raj mane lagyo Kasumbi no rang….

The poem, Kasumbi-no Rang (The Shade Crimson) eulogizes the hue of opium intoxicant that deepens as the liquid condenses during the grinding process. The poem compares it with the elixir of life, the hue symbolizing an integrated and proud existence, not mere survival at any cost. The poetry, Chhello katoro, of this collection enabled Meghani to win the most prestigious title of, National Poet by the Father of the Nation-Mahatma Gandhi.

Eektaro (1940) is collection of 47 poetry. In this collection, the author has added an introduction titled as Aatma Nirikshan (Introspection). This collection of poetry is prominent because it records the transformation of the poet’s outlook towards life. Bapu
na Parna (1943) is the collection of poems about Mahatma Gandhi. Ravindra Veena (1944), is the collection of 66 poems based on Sanchiyata the collection of poetry by Rabindranath Tagore.

Meghani was totally stimulated by the patriotism evoked by Mahatma. The only poet who was very close to Gandhiji’s goal of conveying Literature to mediocre was Meghani. The unique tone echoed in his poetry, due to his keen interest in folk literature and thought-provoking National spirit awakened by movements launched by Gandhi.

**Short stories**

Meghani contributed many short stories in Children’s magazine titled as Bal Mitra before joining as the editor of ‘Saurashtra’. On the basis of two books of short stories in English ‘Stories of Plant Life’, ‘Stories of Animal life’ the author published many stories namely, Bhamra,(Wasps), Gokal Gaai (snails), Varsaad na Tipa (Drops of rain) etc. In 1931, Meghani wrote the first original story namely Kishor ni Vahu a quite independent work of author without any source of origin. Between 1931 to 1935, the collections of short stories published were namely Chitaa na Aangara vol-1, 2, Apnnaa Umberma, and Dhuup Chhaaya. Instead of publishing new edition of these collections, by adding some new stories, the author published two vols. of Meghani ni Navlikao (1931, 1935). The stories written later on were published in the third volume Vilopaan and Beeji Vaato (1946).

In Meghani’s stories sometimes the weakness of highly educated and dominance of the silly and inexperienced becomes the thematic content. Unsuccessful marital relationship is another frequently discussed subject of Meghani’s stories. In such type of
stories afflictions of daughter in law being victim of tyrannies of in-laws is projected. In many stories realistic view of societies is manifested for example, *Manchha ni Suvavad* (Delivery of Manchha), *Kesu na baap nu karaj*, (Ritual rites of Kesu’s father after his death). In all these stories; determined and strong characters struggling against ferocious customs of society are displayed. All these stories do not represent Meghani as a story teller but represent him as a propagandist.

*Veelopan, Saduba, Me Taro Vesh Pheriyo, Marta Juuvaan na Mo e thi, Garash* etc. are legendary or realistic type of novels. In all these stories the narrative method of *Saurastra Ni Rasdhar* rings in.

*Jail office nee Bari* (1934), captures realistic pictures of life of criminals and their family members suffering due to the punishment of detention. Mahida Paritoshik winning story *Mansai Na Diva* (1945) records experiences of life of public welfare worker Ravi Shankar *Maharaj* stated to Meghani in his own words. It gives graphic account of lights of humane lamps twinkling even in hearts of criminals. *Pratima* (1934) and *Palkara* (1935) are compilation of 15 stories transformed on the basis of foreign movies. *Dariyapaar Na Baharvatiya* is transformed on the basis of the realistic stories garnered in the work titled as *The Outlaws of Modern Days* by Esten Wolf.

The only one original collection of drama by Meghani is *Vanthela*. It is about sacrifice of Annant and his wife Kanchan on the altar of social reformation.
In 1932 at the occasion of the publication of the newspaper ‘The Fjualchaab’ the decision of gifting one novel was taken. This resolution prompted Meghani to contribute novels. Meghani contributed 13 novels. Thematically Meghani’s novels fall into four categories. Problem oriented character oriented, social oriented and actions oriented.

The first novel Satya nee Sodhma-1932 (In search of Truth), is modeled on the novel of Epten Sinkler’s novel, Samuel the Sikker. It is the novel about the development of rural young man Shyamal into a leader of the people. Other novels are Niranjan (1936), Aapradhi (1938), and Bidela Dwaar (1939). Vasundhara na Vhala Dawla (1937), was the first social novel of Meghani; it reveals the influence of Victor Hugo’s The Laughing Man. In this novel, the main character who is conjurer by profession adores animals and prefers to cultivate affinity with animals, waifs and strays rather than with callous people.

In 1937, Sorath Tara Vehetaan Paannee (Echoes from the Geers- translated by Vinod Meghani in 2005) was published. This novel as well as the author Meghani is landmarks in Gujarati literature. Vevishal (1939) is a social novel recounting perplexing situation rising after marriage of a girl belonging to rich family with a guy of poor family. Tulsi kyaro (1940) is a novel about the family of a professor Veer Suut after his second marriage. Ra Gangajaliyo (1939) commemorates the story of the era of Ra, Mandlik of Junagadh during 15th century. It is about deterioration of the king of Junagadh from Ra Mandlik into Gangajaliyo. It is the saga of Mandlik’s degeneration caused by Mandlik’s renunciation of his own religion and accepting Muslim religion. Gujarat No Jay Vols. 1-
2, (1939, 42) was the last novel written during the 13th year of Vikram Samvaant (the Vikram era that had begun in 56 B.C.). It voices 25th efforts of restoring and renewing Gujarat.

*Prabhu padhariya* (1943) is social novel dealing with social life of Burmese. *Kaal Chakra* (1947), is the incomplete novel of Meghani, it was attempted to cover perplexing social issues of 1940-50. Meghani’s task of writing novel remained unfulfilled as he left this mortal world on 9th March 1947 when he was in his fifty first years.

**Miscellaneous works**

Meghani has never contributed any autobiography but his writings lay bare some determining events of his personal life. The introduction of *Sorathi Geet Kathao* throws light on initial stages of his life. *Ektaaro* focuses on author’s vista of life. In *Parkamma* and *Chellu Prayaan* the originator has annotated on the process of research of folk literature, the same subject which was the apple of author’s eye. In these works; Meghani’s zeal and perseverance for the research of folk literature is apparent. *Lee.Snehadhin Zaverchand* (1948) is compilation of selected 176 epistles published after Meghani’s death. The original collection of letters was republished with some more changes in 2003 by Himanshi Sheilat and Vinod Meghani. The collections of epistles enable one to peep inside Meghani’s family and literary life. *Saurashtra Na Khandhero ma* and *Sorath Na Teere Teere* are travelogues giving introductory information of historical, geographical, social life and literature of Saurashtra. ‘*Veraan*’, *Paribhraman*, and *Sambela na Suur* are the collections of Meghani’s articles. Right with the commencement of his career till its end Meghani’s activities of translations, edition
and compilation persistently continued. Meghani considered the activities of translations and procreations as valuable works as the original works. Meghani had contributed three translations of Bengali dramas namely *Rano Pratap* (1923), *Sahahjhaan* (1927), and *Raja Rani* (1926).

The prose narrative was not new to Gujarati Literature but the affluent use of Sorathi vocabulary, Idioms, figures of speech, tuned and graceful narration kicked off an unparalleled mode of narration of Gujarati prose.

**Meghani’s contribution to literature**

Meghani was passionate to delve into the hoary depth of the folklore of saurashtra region, a unique land that is throbbing and alive. This passion prompted Meghani to search and research literature. His contribution in the field of folk literature is immense and noteworthy. The reason behind Meghani’s fame does not lie in the matter that he was the first to cultivate an untilled field of folk literature. There were many writers who worked on the form of folk literature especially: Dalpat- Farbes, Narmad, Mahipatram, Parsi editor F.B. Kinkaid and many others. Though many writers contributed to folk literature; Meghani has remained peerless as the contributor of folk literature. Meghani’s contribution to folk literature remains at par from his contemporaries as well as predecessors because Meghani studied folk literature as whole rather than part. Another main difference in Meghani’s effort is that alike other he did not merely study couple of genres at a glance; Meghani explored and scrutinized the entire form of literature. Meghani’s keenness regarding research of folk literature has made Meghani and folk literature inseparable. In the foreword to *Saurashtra nee Rashdhar*, Meghani wrote that
his love for region and especially regional pride inspired him towards the study of folk literature. Had it been merely regional pride then it would not have lasted for long. Neither regional pride nor influence of western countries had enthused Meghani’s writings.

His efforts of studying folk culture of Saurashtra enabled him to gauge the fathom of rich social and cultural heritage of Saurashtra. The study made him realize the need of preserving the treasure trove of sublime values, innate ideals and mosaic culture of past. Meghani ventured to keep essence of cultural and social heritage alive through folk literature because it is the major source of inspiration for the present as well as future generation. Meghani’s mission of life was to pursue research and to edit folktales. Scenario of his work enlarged as he proceeded in his research and edition work. Meghani’s dream was to cater history of gallant caste that gave birth to folk literature and preserved it. It was a ‘Herculian task’. It was very difficult to handle the most difficult project single handily. His work was equivalent to work done by one institution. In spite of doing the path breaking work in folk literature, he constantly experienced pangs for the work left untouched in the field of folk literature. Meghani not simply read Folk literature or knew it; he experienced as well as lived folk literature. Meghani’s aim was of revival of folk literature. Throughout his life, he single handily strived to make this mission successful. There were two targets to fulfill-

a) Meghani wanted to make educated class free from prejudice.

b) Meghani wanted to establish folk collection as literature by giving best and classic specimen of folk literature.
Meghani successfully and vigorously fulfilled both the task.

Western education consciously or unconsciously nurtured disparity between folk culture and civilized culture. Due to contact with the west; scholastic class developed a particular type of repugnance for folk literature. Meghani united folk life and folk literature. By becoming part of folk culture and civilized culture, Meghani proved that folk culture is not an un-civilized culture. English poet Berk’s lamentation echoes in one of his magnum opus poem titled as ‘The age of chivalry has gone.’ In the history of Saurashtra similar type epoch of love and chivalry is recorded. The culture of love and chivalry, which ended, was sounded and felt in folk literature. Unfortunately in the new era it was about to extinct. In the new age, it was almost buried and overlooked. This buried culture was moaning in pain for survival. It was lamenting in pain: - “Give us a way out, give us a way out. Those who have buried us themselves will dig us out tomorrow and put our ashes in memorial then remorse in pain that oh how we allowed our fascinating and valiant human culture to extinct!” (Bhatt 525)

This moaning was heard and felt by Meghani who by employing his tremendous energy and by spending years and years in research; brought into lime light the cultural trove which was on the verge of extinction. Meghani captured almost all the attributes of colossal sorthi culture through his collection namely: Sorthi Bhavartiya ‘Rasdhar’, ‘Radhiyaii Raat’, ‘Bharvatiya’, ‘Santo’, ‘Chundi’, ‘Kankavati’, and many others. Meghani by making a huge collection in a written form of oral sorthi literature; created a new world of vast Gujarati literature. It does not mean that before Meghani nobody attempted to compile sorthi literature. Those efforts were made even before seventy-five years ago. The attempt began with the publication of the book named, Stories of Gujarat
and Kathiwaad by one Parsi scholar during ‘Narmad era’. After that the man who made the mission of life to discover, chivalric tales, biographies of outlaws, narration about saints, songs by women, songs of season, and many other facets of folk literature was no one but Meghani. He discovered almost all genres of folk literature from every nook and corner and set them on one canvass. By fusing every disentangled detail one into one Meghani had served master minded works without violating its originality.

Meghani did research and editing of folk songs with progressive attitude of making folk forms a complete developed form. He worked on folk tales with the same forward looking goal. He classified folk tales into the following forms.

1. Legends and Myths
2. Biographies
3. Ritual stories
4. Ballads
5. Histories
6. Fairy tales
7. Metaphoric tales
8. Parables
9. Comic and entertain folk tales

Meghani never applied any strict parameter regarding the form of folk tales because he was appreciator of beauty. He was interested in feeling and appreciating beauty. Meghani wanted to relish folk literature rather than burdening the form with strict rules. Mahatma Gandhi brought revolutionary change in the thoughts of people. During
this period of awakening, the important task was to keep up people’s powerful gusto of humanitarian feelings for each other to accentuate the sense of nationhood. Meghani successfully carried out this main work of Gandhiji. Mahatma Gandhi denoted the responsibilities of educated class for the upheaval of common as citizens of one nation. Meghani explained quintessential qualities of common people. Most of the people who merely drag their life are almost in the state of limbo- the lifeless and indecisive state.

Meghani showcased super qualities of human beings by portraying audacious characters from legends and from the records of histories of folk literature. Through the portrayal of dauntless spirited characters and narration of enterprising events Meghani’s object was to throw light on inexhaustible strength of human beings to fight against evil as well as vagaries of life. He provided ample of examples of human strength, unbelievable sacrifice of human beings for their fellow beings, power of their emotions, and zenith of their intellect. The poem that Meghani sung for someone is applicable to him. Meghani awakened interest in educated youths towards memorial stones, temples, villages, nature, jungle, and mountain. They started to see bards and old generation with respect; this was the greatest service of Meghani to nation. To create feeling of unity it is very necessary to cultivate familiarity with each other. Furthermore familiarity without affection bears no result. Meghani strengthened familiarity by cultivating the bond of affection. Meghani created motley world through his works and put it before people in such a way that after reading Meghani’s collections; it is not only difficult but also impossible to condemn common people. He created a sense of awe for old, for people in tattered or dirty clothes or for people who speak slang or dialect.
Limitations of Meghani’s Writing

There are few limitations of Meghani as the editor and a writer. According to critics there is hyper use of innovations instead of actual presentation of folk tales. Furthermore there is excess use of imaginative language, emotional experiences and missionary impulse. Narotam Palan the well known Gujarati writer and a critic has enumerated the following limitation of Meghani’s works.

1. Awesome and curiosity centered approach.
2. Exclusive appreciation of qualities of lower class by ignoring their limitations.
3. Excessive use of Charan as narrator of the story
4. Introductions of only particular region
5. Mistake of considering folk literature as only literature
6. Analysis of miracles of ‘Saint Lore’
7. In research and appreciation of Folk literature, Meghani is present as creator but absent as linguist.
8. Coribantian revelers, necromancers, mendicants, superstitious complete the picture of society but they are all absent in Meghani’s literature. (Kothari 131-132)

In spite of all minor limitations of Meghani’s writings, no one can deny the fact that there is charismatic effect of his writings. Importance of his works do not belittle even if one apply strict parameters to point out Meghani’s limitation. All limitations seem merely dwarf in comparison to his valuable works. Meghani’s outstanding understanding of life has become itself heritage for readers. Meghani has remained a colossal folklorist.
Max Muller, Benfe, Arne, Julius koh, Karl koh, Stih Thomasan, Tony Pager and many others world known research scholars were of elevated rank, all these masters had done substantial and distinguished work in the field of literature. The main difference between Meghani’s work and these scholars’ work is that all these scholars were affiliated to university and it was their profession to focus on folk study and it was their source of earning. In Meghani’s case, it was his ardor to focus on folk study and there was no monetary gain from it. His source of livelihood was journalism. Alike the other Scholars his source of revenue was not much affluent. He struggled hard to fulfill responsibility as a journalist and to fulfill his dream to dig up literary heritage of Kathiawar. Similar to western research scholar if Meghani had got an opportunity to make use of rich libraries as well as universities then within two and half decade he could have done incessant research.

Meghani constantly endeavored to induce reverence for every individual and awareness of history. Even today Meghani’s works are relevant not simply as literature but as a repository of Gujarati culture. To sum up, when other men of letters of his time were groping for an Indian identity and struggled to awaken the sleeping multitude of India by taking inspiration from the Occident, Meghani asserted that there was no need to look overseas, that our own folklore has sufficient cultural vitality and inspirational potential to awaken the masses. This was the essence, the spirit of truth that he realized by understanding the essence of folklore.