

Shamal is considered to be one of the prominent writers of medieval Gujarati literature. He is the exponent of verse-story form wherein he may not be better at verse, but is best at story-weaving. He has exploited the treasure of folktales and made innovations in the traditional folk-tale form, and aimed at entertaining the readers through his excellent art of story-telling, imagination, riddles and plot-construction. Worldliness is the foremost quality of his literature which made him more popular in his own times.

Dhiru Parikh, Professor and Head of Department of Gujarati at Gujarat University, Ahmedabad is a practicing poet and a critic. There are thirty volumes including poetry, criticism, short-story, biographical sketches and edited works to his credit.

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S H A M A L

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The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodhana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha.

Below them, is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

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SHAMAL

DHIRU PARIKH

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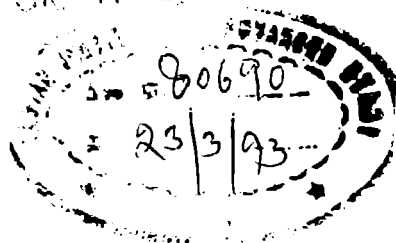
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I

Introduction : Stories in Medieval Gujarati Literature

Almost all narrative forms have as a necessary ingredient an element which may be called the story. This, therefore, is a feature which is as old as the earliest narrative cycles in literatures of the world. Medieval Gujarati literature also has story as its staple form.

It was mainly the Jain writers who gave stories mostly in verse and sometimes in prose. The aim of these writers primarily was to enlighten, and delight took a second place. Tarunprabh, Somsundar, Vijaybhadrā, Nemivijay and Manikyasundar are some of the well known Jain contributors to this literature. Other writers like Sadhukirti, Dharmasimha, Udaybhanu etc. have made use of the material of the cycle of Vikrama's tales in their Works.

In addition to the Jains, non-Jain writers also contributed to this form of literature. Asait who wrote *Hansauli*, Madhusudan who wrote *Vikramcharitra*, Bhima who wrote the story entitled *Saday-Vatsa*, Bhalan who wrote *Kadambari*, Narpati who wrote *Nandabatrissi*, Ganapati who wrote *Madhavanala-Kamakandala*, were some of such non-Jain writers.

If one wants to know about the beginnings of popular fiction, one must go to Prakrit literature, as the origins of the Medieval Gujarati stories are to be found there.

On the one hand there was a flow of stories based on mythology, while on the other, of imaginary stories. Mythological characters were very often invested with super-human qualities,

and so they appeared to be unreal and, therefore, uninteresting to medieval folk to that extent. The characters which were more fictional, on the other hand, displayed some human weaknesses. These characters, therefore, had a great appeal to the medieval audience for they reflected their own image. Such characters deal with human sentiments like love, chivalry, jealousy, greed etc. and so they serve to elevate the listeners up in the world of imagination. These stories in one way released the reader's mind from its worldly worries and gave it an outlet for the time being. This accounts for the appeal of these stories.

In medieval times the narrative was still tied to the oral tradition. The story-teller had to depend much on the memory and attention of his listeners. So the sequence of events in the story normally followed a linear course of development. The story-teller tried his best to make it interesting by various devices such as inserting a story within a story, riddles, minor episodes and incidents etc. He also interwove a number of wise sayings in form of verses to enlighten his audience. The story-teller of medieval age killed two birds with one stone : providing pleasure and enlightenment at the same time.

In medieval story, elements such as plot and motif were often borrowed from tradition, written as well as oral. The story-tellers of this age created the world of various characters – super-human characters – like ghosts, gods and goddesses in addition to human characters. There were also birds and beasts appearing with human attributes.

Most of the stories of this period are love-stories but the story-teller treats *vir* (heroic) and *adbhut* (wonder) sentiments as well. Such was the state of story-writing before Shamal entered the scene.

II

A Biographical Sketch

Shamal is one of the outstanding writers of the medieval Gujarati Literature. His, then, is a note-worthy contribution to this literature in a historical sense. Those were peaceful days and the people would throng to listen to him at night when they were tired after the day's toil.

Shamal's tales were a source of recreation providing his audience with what Robert Frost has called "Wisdom and delight". He reached the peak of popularity within no time. The reason was that he drew his inspiration from folk-tales i.e. not in the traditional sense of oral and anonymous tales but the popular tales, what K. M. Munshi has called the "popular fiction", and he so adapted them as to appeal to the feelings of his audience. He, in this way, channelled his creativity in a new direction and carved out his own path. His departure from the practice of his predecessors and contemporaries led him to make changes in a popular folk-tale and to graft upon it the *padyavarta* form, one may call it verse-tale, of which he is the master.

The dates of birth and death of this popular writer are, however, uncertain. But it is certain that he was born towards the close of the 16th century. His first work *Padmavati* includes a reference to the date of its composition. It was written in the year 1718. It is reasonable to imagine that he should be of 20-22 years when he wrote this work. Accordingly his birth-date would fall somewhere in the year 1696-98. His last work is *Sudabahonteri* written in 1765. Thus his career as a writer covers a span of nearly

50 years. It is certain that he lived up to 1765. Nothing is known about the date of his death. The autobiographical references in his works are the only source to know something of him. The following is a brief outline of his life :

Shamal's surname was Trivedi, though he, in his writings, refers to it as *Bhat*,. His father's name was Vireshwar and his mother was Anandibai. Ladha was his brother and Parshottam was the name of Shamal's son. He was Shrigod Malavi Brahmin by caste. He passed his early years in Rajpur and Gomatipur, the then Veganpur, one of the suburbs of Ahmedabad. It seems that he followed the hereditary profession of a *Kathakar* (Story-teller) and started his career by telling religious stories. His three works *Rupavati*, *Palnavati* and *Macan-Mohana* along with first 15 tales of his latter work *Simhasanbatrishi*, a collection of 32 tales, were productions of his earlier career. Nana Bhat was his Guru to whom he was greatly indebted. He might have learnt about mythological stories and folk-tales of Jain origin from his guru Nana Bhat.

But out of all his early works, *Simhasanbatrishi*, though incomplete in those years, earned him fame in Gujarat. A bard named Guman Barot heard the name of Shamal. He talked to his patron Rakhidas, of village Simhuj in the district of Charotar in Gujarat, about Shamal. Rakhidas was very fond of stories; so he sent Guman Barot to Ahmedabad to invite Shamal, who accepted the invitation of Rakhidas and came to Simhuj to stay with him in 1729. Thus Rakhidas became his patron, and gifted some land to Shamal for his maintenance. Keshavalal Dhru, a noted Gujarati scholar and researcher, found the original gift-deed by Rakhidas in favour of Shamal and published it. Shamal himself acknowledges Rakhidas's gesture at the end of his work *Vetalpachisi*; incorporated in his *Simhasanbatrishi* as the 32nd and last story.

There he says :

‘ *Rakhidas rajeshvari tedyo pandit prit,
Karo puran kavita tamyo je Rama-kathant rit. ’*

(Generous Rakhidas invited the scholar (Shamal) with love and asked him to compose a poem based on mythology on the model of Rama-katha.)

Shamal has written an independent story named *Bhabharam* to discharge the obligation of his patron Rakhidas and immortalised him. After he settled down in Simhuj under the patronage of Rakhidas, he was free from all worries, and hence could make a full-time writer of himself. Here, he completed his celebrated work *Simhasanbatrishi*, after having written the remaining 17 stories. He also wrote many other verse-tales, out of which *Nandabatrishi* and *Sudabahonteri* are well-known. *Sudabahonteri* is said to be his last work completed in 1765. It is likely that he might have lived for some years after 1765. The exact number of years he lived thereafter is, however, not known. This is all we know about Shamal's life.

Premanand-Shamal Rivalry

For many years people were given to understand that there had been a rivalry between the two great medieval poets Premanand and Shamal. Both of them were cited to have written against each other. Some lines, from their works, obviously referring to this were quoted to prove the existent of their rivalry. But later, some other scholars found that Premanand was much older than Shamal. So the claim of there being references in his work to Shamal cannot stand. Shamal was a child when Premanand was in his heyday. Moreover there was no reason for rivalry between them, because both were practising different forms of literature — Premanand the *Akhyān* form and Shamal the *Padyavarta* form. It was, later thought that the rivalry was between Shamal and Vallabh, the son of Premanand. But further researches revealed that there was no writer named Vallabh, and in any case Premanand had no son named Vallabh.

III

Works Based on Mythology

Shamal's works can be divided into two groups; the first group consists of works based on mythological themes and the second on folk-tales. The second group is larger and shows more of his originality, and there lies his genuine creativity.

So far as Shamal's mythological works are concerned, he has followed his predecessors. In the beginning of his career he tried to please his audience by telling such stories. Thus these works are the product of his early career : *Angadvishti* (Angad's negotiations), *Ravan-Mandodari Samvad* (Dialogue between Ravana and Mandodari), *Shivapurān* (Shiva's story).

Angadvishti

There are two *Angadvishtis* ascribed to Shamal. As Professor Anantrai Rawal has pointed out, he had written a short work named *Angadvishti* in 1743, the second and longer one was written in 1752 and was later published; this possibly has many interpolations, according to N. I. Desai. The work deals with the famous episode of the Ramayana, wherein Rama sends Angad to Ravana for negotiations. Though written in Gujarati, its language shows traces of Arabic, Persian and Hindi. The language of *Angadvishti* is forceful and characterisation is lively. The battle between Rama and Ravana is vividly described at the end of the work.

Ravana-Mandodari Samvad

The work is based on the theme of the Ramayana. As the title suggests there is a dialogue between Ravana and his wife

Mandodari. By the time the main episode begins, we are nearly half way through the work. In the first half Shamal depicts Rama's dwelling in the forest, Surpankha's complaint to Ravana against Rama-Lakshmana, the abduction of Sita, her imprisonment in Ashokavatika in Lanka, Mandodari's persuasion, Rama's efforts to search Sita, Hanuman's setting fire to Lanka and Rama's attack on it. In the latter part of the book, Shamal narrates what the people of the eighteen *varnas* (castes) believed about the battle between Rama and Ravana. The people of Lanka believed that Ravana would be victorious, though Mandodari persuades Ravana to handover Sita to Rama and to seek his friendship by making peace with him. It is here in the later part that Shamal shows a rich vein of humour in depicting the professional characteristics of people of different castes. Each member displays the qualities of his caste and occupation through the style and language he uses. But it also happens that in his enthusiasm to entertain his rustic audience, Shamal slips into vulgarity of language at places, which results in the belittling of great mythological characters in unbecoming portrayals.

Shivapuran

As a Brahmin, Shamal had faith in Lord Shiva. His *Shivapuran* shows his dedication to Shiva. The book consists of 22 chapters, each one beginning with *Mangalacharan* (invocation of deity) and ending with *Falashruti* (showing of result). Though it is a religious story, Shamal aims at entertaining the listeners in a folk-tale fashion, according to his usual practice. He sings the greatness of Shiva and preaches morality and devotion.

The author describes some erotic episodes too with a view to entertain his audience. One of these episodes is that of Dasarath, the king of Mathura, and Kalavati, his newly wedded wife. Kalavati is observing the vow of *Panchakshar* when she marries. So she forbids Dasarath from making love to her during the period of the vow. But Dasarath, in the heat of passion fails to check himself and forces her, which is described thus by Shamal :

*‘ Bal kari nakhi te bal, juvati angathi uthi jwal,
Swamisang kare jetle, tan agni vadhyo tetle. ’*

(The maid was forcibly laid, flame rose from her body; the closer the husband embraced her, the more intense she felt the fire within.)

In the third chapter Gautama, the seer, while showing the importance of a pilgrimage to Gokarneshvar, describes a poor, ragged, diseased lady, thus :

*‘ Ek nari chandal tani, sham varna ne vruddha ja ghani,
Luli langadi roge randhali, andhir badhir ne pag pangali,
Kodi kushti raurav rog, bhunda bhamyani kera bhog,
Rom rom Gumadgad dith, kayae kotidha kit. ’*

(There is a chandal lady, black and very old, she is lame, blind, deaf and invalid. She is suffering from leprosy. Her fate is dismal. Boils are seen all over her body which is full of countless worms.)

There are two possible years of the composition of this work, 1718 and 1748. But it is more likely that Shamal might have written it in 1718, because there is no mention of Rakhidas, his patron in it since he refers to Rakhidas almost in all his works after 1729. *Shivapurāṇ* is a unique work of its kind by Shamal in medieval Gujarati literature.

IV

Other Works

Shamal's real success lies in the works based on folk-tales. He turned to writing amusing verse-tales based on old folk-tales after having drawn on mythology as a source, and soon he was popular. His imagination worked well and creativity bloomed fully in these writings. Some of his acclaimed works are *Padmavati*, *Chandra-Chandravati*, *Baras-Kasturi*, *Madan-Mohana* and *Nandbatrishi*. His *Simhasanbatrishi* and *Sudabahonteri* are longer works of 32 and 72 stories respectively.

Padmavati

Padmavati is said to be his first work written in 1718 A.D. It is a love-story of Pushpsen, Padmavati and Sulochana.

Pushpsen was the son of Champaksen, the king of Champavati. One spring, when Pushpsen was returning from a hunt, he met beautiful Sulochana who asked him to pierce the pair of vessels on her head failing which he should marry her. Deceived by trickery of Sulochana Pushpasen missed the target. She told him about her caste, her father's name and her residence in a certain street in an enigmatic style. After sometime, Pushpsen met her as she had told him. He then vowed to marry her.

But meantime an incident took place. Two tigers rushed into the city when merry-making was going on in the royal court. The king issued a proclamation that the tigers be killed. He added that any person who failed to come forward to join the hunt would meet with death. Pushpsen failed to come forward unknowingly

and fell victim to the king's wrath. The king, however, allowed Pushpsen to marry Sulochana according to Pushpsen's promise. But the king banished his son Pushpsen for twelve years. Sulochana told Pushpsen that she would wait for him and if he did not return after twelve years she would end her life.

Banished Pushpasen reached Dharanagar and managed to see its king Kuntibhoj who employed him as a companion to the prince. The maid-servant Vihangana praised the elegance of Pushpsen before the princess Padmavati, who fell in love with him and wanted to see him. Accordingly, the maid-servant conveyed the message and Pushpsen called on her that night and solved the riddles asked by the princess. She, in turn, put a proposal of marriage, which he accepted. The teacher of the princess played the role of the priest and joined them in wedlock. After three years the king came to know about this marriage and ordered an assassin to kill Pushpsen and to bring his eyes. The minister came to know about this order and did a favour to the princess by informing the assassin that she wanted to save Pushpsen. The princess asked Vihangana to save Pushpsen if necessary by even bribing the assassin. Vihangana for this purpose engaged the dancer Chandravati who helped Pushpsen to be set free and hid him. The assassin took with him the eyes of an antelope instead of Pushpsen's and showed them to the king.

After eight months Kuntibhoj asked the royal astrologer about the prospects of Padmavati's marriage. But at that very moment a young dancer of sixteen entered the royal court and captivated the king by her performance. The king asked her to stay there for a month, but her mother refused on the ground that she wanted to marry her to Pushpsen, the prince of Champavati, versatile in all arts. She added that a proper match like him had been found out after much efforts. The king was reminded about his daughter's marriage and called his bard to go to Champavati to ask for Pushpsen's hand. Chandravati, the dancer who was present there took an advantage of the situation and declared that

she would bring Pushpsen to the royal court. Hearing this the King was happy, but very soon he was shocked to learn that he was the same Pushpsen whom he had managed to assassinate. But the next moment he was relieved to know that Pushpsen had been saved and was safe at Chandravati's residence. The king married off Padmavati to Pushpsen very gladly.

Pushpsen, then, was reminded about his parents and his wife Sulochana. Chandravati knew his anxiety and went to his parents and broke the news about Pushpsen's well-being. Kunti-bhoj sent his daughter Padmavati to her husband's house.

While the husband and the wife were on their way home, Padmavati stumbled and fell down unconscious. But she recovered soon by the grace of the Jakshani (the Yaksha-woman) who too was banished and chanced to pass that way. Pushpsen and Padmavati reached the palace and his parents and his first wife Sulochana were happy to receive them. There was exchange of riddles between Sulochana and Padmavati and soon they developed sisterly love. Thus the tale has a happy ending.

The tale has 775 verses composed in Dohara and Chopai metres. The riddles are interwoven as a part of the tale. Though this work is said to be Shamal's first one, it appears from its mature style that it might have been written at a later stage. The story is based on the traditional material of its kind. The character of Padmavati is well-drawn, and the story is well told. The use of the riddles is befitting the art of a story. Ramanarayan Pathak, the noted critic, has rightly praised the interesting and mature style of Shamal in portraying the character of 'Padmavati'.

Chandra-Chandravati

'*Chandra-Chandravati*' is another love-story written by Shamal. Chandrasen, the prince of Shripatrai—the king of Shrihath, during his pilgrimage met Chandravati, the daughter of Shrivantsang, when he happened to be at Shramelapur on the

bank of the river Narmada. As he entered the city, he first met a flower-girl named Mana. She welcomed him. Chandrasen had a vow to worship Lord Shiva before his meals. He was accordingly proceeding to the temple of Shiva when he was stopped by Mana, who informed him that as it was Sunday, Chandravati was also to go to the temple and so he could enter the temple only after noon-time. Chandrasen then, hid himself in the loft and saw Chandravati in the temple, and was charmed by her beauty. Next Sunday he wrote a love-letter to her and placed it on the Shivalinga. Chandravati picked up the letter, read it, and fell in love. She however, told Mana that she would marry only the person who could solve her riddles. She sent 32 riddles to Chandrasen (from chhappa 228 to 259) through Mana, which he solved successfully and in his turn asked Chandravati to solve 32 riddles (from chhapa 341 to 372). Chandravati too succeeded in solving all those riddles. They married secretly. Chandrasen, after the marriage, went on his pilgrimage; and Mana kept his marriage-deed with her as Chandravati was pregnant by then. The king, Chandravati's father, came to know about her pregnancy and ordered his minister to leave her in the forest. The king's minister, instead of leaving her in the forest, took her to his home where she gave birth to a son.

During his pilgrimage Chandrasen reached the capital of king Rajsangh, who imprisoned him and sentenced him to death because when the king was on tour once, he was caught by Chandrasen's father. When Chandrasen was being led to the scaffold, Nidhinandani, the daughter of Rajsangh, saw him and fell in love with him. She immediately decided to die for him. The minister advised the king to set Chandrasen free from the death sentence. The king did accordingly and married off his daughter Nidhidandani to Chandrasen. After a year he remembered Chandravati and attacked Shrimelapur. He sent a proposal of marriage with Chandravati which if rejected would mean war. Chandravati's father then repented for sending his daughter to the forest. But minister revealed the fact that he had kept Chandravati at his place. The king was pleased to hear the news and arranged

the meeting of Chandrasen and Chandravati. Nidhinandani was also called and they all returned to Shrihathnagar happily.

The work has 747 verses composed in *Dohara* and *Chopai* metres. Shamal has selected some of the popular and old motifs for this tale and created a new story of his own. One can trace the source of some of his later tales such as *Padmavati*, *Madana-Mohana*, *Bhadra-Bhamini* and *Rupavati*. Some critics are of the opinion that the tale of *Chandra-Chandravati* precedes the tale of *Padmavati* as it is raw in form and less interesting in style.

Baras-Kasturi

' *Baras-Kasturi* ' is again a love-story. Baras was out for a hunt. He threw a stone which struck a Rishi and roused his anger. The Rishi told Baras that if he wanted to show his valour, he should do it by marrying Kasturi. As he was challenged by the Rishi, he set forth in search of Kasturi with the help of Devdhar, the son of the Minister. They at last came to a strange city. Devdhar then, met a flower-girl and knew from her all about Kasturi's past life. They came to know that Kasturi was waiting for her husband of the previous birth. So Devdhar and Baras assumed the guise of *fakirs* and began to move in the city speaking aloud *He Hansa* (Oh, Hansa) to attract the attention of Kasturi, who called them and knowing the story she married Baras.

Baras and Kasturi then got into an aeroplane and flew. But unfortunately the plane crashed into the sea and Kasturi was swallowed by a fish. After sometime a fisherman caught the fish and Kasturi was saved. She took shelter in the palace of the King who was her father's friend. Meantime Baras came to the shore floating on a plank. He had also saved a serpent, who threw a string at him. As Baras tied it, he was turned into a parrot. The parrot flew away and reached where Kasturi had taken refuge. As the string was untied, the parrot was again transformed back into Baras. Thus, Kasturi and Baras met at last.

The tale is based partly on a story in Somdev's *Kathasarit-sagar*. Shamal has changed the names of the characters and developed a plot in his own style. The story covers interesting episodes and the development of the plot is convincing. The *adbhut* (the sentiment of wonder) is well brought out.

Madana-Mohana

This is a story of the love-affair of Mohana and Madana. Mohana was the daughter of Madhusudan, the King of Mathura. A scholar named Shukdev was engaged by the king to teach Mohana, on the advice of his minister. The King had arranged for a screen to be placed between the teacher and Mohana during the lessons, thinking that this device might prevent them from falling in love as was natural at their young age. Moreover, for the same reason Shukdev had been told that Mohana was blind, and she had been informed that Shukdev was suffering from leucoderma. The teaching and learning process was going well. But on one occasion when Mohana failed to solve the riddle given by Shukdev, he became harsh and called her blind out of anger. She retorted and paid in the same coins by calling him one suffering from leucoderma. Madana, the son of the minister, who chanced to be present on that occasion happened to remark that both of them were, in fact, right ('Sanchan chho be sarva'). At this moment Mohana removed the screen, saw Madana, and fell in love with him at first sight. The teacher and Mohana, then came to know the fact that they suffered neither from leucoderma nor from blindness respectively. She begged Shukdev's pardon and requested him to get her married to Madana in secret. Madana on hearing the proposal of marriage was taken aback as he, a mere minister's son, could not marry her who, after all, was a princess. Madana got up and began to walk off, when he was stopped by Mohana. She insistently asked him to marry her, failing which she would end her life.

Madana and Shukdev persuaded her not to be thoughtless and rash. They told her the parables of people who behaved rashly in this way and subsequently repented. Mohana also told one

parable (as is the usual artistry of Shamal in his tales) in her favour to marry Madana. The parable was of love-marriage of a jackal and a deer, which is not possible otherwise as they are the animals of different species. On the strength of this parable Mohana argued if the jackal and the deer could marry, why she and Madana could not. She was firm in her decision; she would either marry Madana or give up her life. She took a knife and was about to stab herself. Madana stopped her doing so. At last Shukdev the teacher, performed the marriage ceremony of Madana and Mohana in secret. Shukdev, fearing the wrath of the king, left the palace.

The king after sometime called Mohana, hoping that her study was over, and asked if she thought it was time for her to marry. She did not reveal her secret. The king, then, asked the queen to know her daughter's desire. Mohana revealed everything to her mother saying that Madana was not at all at fault in the matter, and added that it was she who insisted on their marriage. On hearing the news of Mohana's marriage the king was angry and called the minister to seek his advice. The minister advised that Mohana, being a lady, should be pardoned, Shukdev being a brahmin ought to be let off and, Madana be banished. The king acted accordingly.

Mohana asked Madana to take her with him in a man's guise. Madana refused to do so. Mohana told him a parable of a Rajput woman accompanying her husband in a man's guise. Madana subsequently agreed.

Madana and Mohana, then, left the city at midnight. They reached another city where they saw a courtesan dancing. The clever courtesan looking at Mohana recognised that she was a woman in man's guise. She invited Mohana to her place under the pretext of selling her some pearls. Madana sensed some intrigue, and asked Mohana not to accept the invitation. But Mohana ignored his warning and went to the courtesan's house, where Mohana was told that the king had come to know about her real identity. Mohana was then asked by the courtesan to stay with

her as a prostitute. She sent a maid-servant to Madana with the message that Mohana was sent some six miles to the East, as the king had come to discover her secret. This set forth Madana in search of Mohana. Mohana in the meanwhile had come to find out the courtesan's intentions. She, at night, got up and cut off the nose, ears, the lips and the hair of the courtesan and left the city in a man's guise.

While she was passing through the forest, she saw a cobra caught in fire. She saved it and the cobra gave her the jewel that could cure leprosy, leucoderma, snakebite, blindness and sterility in women.

She reached Mahidapur and stayed at a jeweller's place. The jeweller's wife was childless, Mohana dipped the jewel into water and gave the water to the jeweller's wife to drink. She drank the water and was pregnant. The jeweller was pleased to know this and married off his niece Manekde to Mohana who was in man's guise. From Mahidapur Mohana left for Badrikedar under the pretext of going on a pilgrimage. There she cured the blindness of the king with the help of the gifted jewel. The king gave his daughter Kanakavali in marriage to Mohana. From there, she proceeded to Damalpur where she cured the disease of the son of the minister. In reward the minister married off his daughter, Padmini to Mohana. She came to the city named Chandravati, where she cured king of the leucoderma, and got his daughter Chandravadani in marriage. She further reached Sopara, where she saved the only princess Krishnavati from snake-bite. The king was pleased and arranged the marriage of his only daughter Krishnavati with Mohana. She was thereafter, declared king, but she did not reveal her true identity as woman, and excused herself saying that she was under a vow for six months. She got idols of Madana, Mohana, Shukdev and the minister installed in the temples of lord Shiva, in the public square.

On the other hand, Madana misled by the courtesan walked towards the east and reached the city of Rupavati. Aruna, the

princess of Rupavati had declared her intention to marry the person who could correctly answer her questions. Madana answered the questions correctly and married her. He stayed there for seven days, and then reached Sopara where Mohana was the ruler in man's guise. He saw the idols and immediately grasped the truth of the matter. He saw Mohana, now a king, and she engaged him as her minister. The two, at last, reached Mathura, with Manekde, Kanakavati, Padmini, Chandravadani, Krishnavati and Aruna. The king of Mathura was frightened, thinking it was a seige. Madana sent a messenger conveying the fact that they were none else but Mohana and Madana. Mohana also put off her man's guise and told Manekde and other co-wives her true story. All of them accepted Madana as their husband. The king of the Mathura was pleased to see his daughter and son-in-law after many years. He retired and declared Madana as his successor to the throne. Shukdev, the teacher of Mohana, was also called and honoured.

This story is considered to be one of the mature works of Shamal. He has made the story a lengthy one by interweaving many episodes. The plot-construction is not so loose as it has been in his earlier works; nor it is so well managed as in his later works. It is written in *Dohara* and *Chopai* metres, and is composed of 1317 verses. Some of the verses are composed in Hindi also. The six sub-stories are well placed and every verse is interesting. The character of Mohana is well drawn. Her efforts to win Madana are well described and the whole of the story is narrated artistically and interestingly. Mohana's adventures are skilfully depicted to sustain the interest of the reader. The work establishes Shamal's genius as a story-teller.

Nandbatrishi

Nandbatrishi is chiefly the story of a husband's suspicion of his wife's fidelity and the resulting conflict. Nandsen was a king of Nandnagar. One night he was moving in the city in disguise to know whether his subjects were happy or not. During his rounds he saw a washerman washing clothes at the lake. In the course of

his exchanges with the washerman, which took place mainly in the form of riddles, the king came to know that the clothes with the washerman belonged, in fact, to the beautiful wife of the minister Vailochana. The king was fascinated with the beauty of the minister's wife described by the washerman.

The king, then, decided to see the minister's wife. He managed to send the minister Vailochana to Kutch to buy horses. The king took the opportunity to visit the minister's house and to see his wife Padmini. He was stopped by the gate-man, but the king bribed him with his ear-rings and the gate-man allowed him to enter the house. Padmini and her parrot were shrewd enough to understand the ill-intention of the King's unbecoming entry. The parrot told the king that as the minister was not at home, so, his wife should be looked after by the king as his daughter. Padmini scolded the parrot for offering his advice to the king and added that the king had his own discrimination. On hearing these words which expressed Padmini's trust in him, the king felt ashamed. He sat down to dine and Padmini served him rice in different colours in plates of different metals. She also served milk of cows who were of different colours. The king wasted little time in realising that the taste of the rice in different colours and of the milk of different cows in essence was the same. He was pleased to notice the cleverness of Padmini and gave her a very valuable ring as a gift. He then came to the gate and asked the gate-man to return the ear-rings gifted by him as his purpose was not fulfilled. The gate-man suggestively replied that the herdsman can show the trough of water to the cattle, and it is not the fault of the herdsman if the cattle do not drink water from it. The king was pleased to listen to the clever reply of the gate-man. He gave him a costly shawl as a gift and returned to his palace.

After some time Vailochana returned from Kutch and on reaching home he was annoyed to see the costly ear-rings and shawl with the gate-keeper and the ring on Padmini's finger. The parrot and Padmini narrated the whole incident to him but Vailochana remained upset. Full of suspicion, he forsook Padmini.

One day, an year after the above incident, the king and the minister Vailochana went hunting and reached the city of Nayanavati where Padmini, after being forsaken, was living with her parents. Padmini's father welcomed the king and Vailochana, the son-in-law. After dinner, Padmini, her father, the king and Vailochana sat down to play the game of *Chopat*. Each of the players in throwing the dice uttered a certain formula which stated that if a certain proposition was indeed true the throw of the dice would be a winning one. The proposition of each of the players, excepting Vailochana, sought to prove the innocence of Padmini. But Vailochana, as he was led by suspicion, threw the dice with a proposition which sought to prove Padmini's guilt. Vailochana threw the dice five times and failed everytime. This was enough proof of Padmini's innocence. But Vailochana was yet unwilling to accept it, and refused to give up his suspicion. He was not convinced about the fidelity of Padmini.

The king Nanda and his minister Vailochana, while returning from the hunt came to a large step-well. As the king was thirsty he went down the steps of the well, drank some water and wrote a verse in *dohara* metres on the wall suggesting that he was innocent and had not misbehaved with Padmini. Next, Vailochana went down the steps to drink water. He read the verse on the wall written by the king. To this he added a verse of his own asking why the king should have chosen to visit his house when Padmini was alone. The king went down the steps of the well again and reading the *dohara* of Vailochana wrote yet another below it. The argument in verses went on for sometime, but in the end it failed to remove Vailochana's suspicion.

While proceeding on their journey, the king was fatigued and reclined with his head resting on Vailochana's lap. He was soon fast asleep. Vailochana thought this was a fine opportunity for him to wreak vengeance upon the king. He killed the king and buried his dead body under a *Champa* tree. A gardner perched on the branch of the tree witnessed the hideous act of Vailochana, but decided not to meddle with the cour intrigues. Vailochana was

untied the impression that no body witnessed the act of regicide. So he untied the horse of the king and let him go off. Then he went to the royal palace to inquire whether the king rose from his sleep, with a view to proving himself innocent. Meantime, the king's horse came to the palace without his rider. Efforts were made to search the whereabouts of the king, but in vain. At last after a month the king's son was declared to have succeeded to the royal throne and Vailochana was made to continue as minister.

One day the gardner happened to be late in bringing flowers. The minister Vailochana was angry and fined him. The gardner was offended at this and in a fit of anger he disclosed the secret of the king's murder to his wife. The gardner's wife could not keep the secret to herself and divulged it to the queen. The queen in turn reported it to the prince who was recently made king.

The prince sent diggers who unearthed the remains of the king's body from the spot under the *Champa* tree. Vailochana, then, was compelled to confess the guilt of having murdered the king. On being asked he gave out the explanation that he had murdered the king for his act of adultery with his wife Padmini. The prince next called Padmini and also the parrot and asked them to tell the truth of the matter. Both of them declared on oath that though the king had gone to Vailochana's house with ill-intention, he had not actually done anything to carry it out. Hence both, the king Nanda as well as Padmini were innocent. But Vailochana was not yet ready to trust Padmini's and the parrot's account. Finally, Padmini asked her husband how she could best prove her chastity. Vailochana laid down the condition that if she wanted to prove herself to be a chaste and virtuous wife, she should bring the dead king back to life.

As she was fully confident of her innocence, Padmini prayed to God to help her in her ordeal. Within no time there was thunder and the *Sheshnaga*, the huge cobra, who supported the earth, came out from the nether world known as *Patala*. The cobra brought forth a pot of elixir, and asked Padmini to sprinkle the elixir on

the king's bones. She did as advised by the cobra and the king was brought back to life. He saw the imprisoned minister Vailochana and asked the prince for the reason. The prince, then, narrated the whole story. The king Nanda pardoned the minister and decided to retire and declared the prince to succeed him as a king. Vailochana repented for his past acts. The king restored Padmini to Vailochana who accepted her as his chaste and virtuous wife. Thus the tale has a happy ending.

The story of *Nandabatrishi* reads well and the plot-construction is convincing. It is more mature in style and language than the preceding works. Though the story is short, Shamal has extended it by inserting many didactic verses, riddles and minor episodes. Here he has skilfully interwoven his didactic lines with the main narrative. This work shows Shamal's talent as a story-writer.

The maturity of his experience and expression may be well discerned here. It is a rare thing in medieval literature to use argumentative style as it is successfully done here in *Nandabatrishi*. The episodes of the play of *Chopat* and writing of the *doharas* on the wall of the step-well are interesting and they add a dramatic element to the story.

As far as the characterisation is concerned, *Nandabatrishi* is a success. The characters of Vailochana, the minister, Nanda, the king and Padmini are well drawn. All these characters tend to be 'round' and not 'flat' characters as E.M. Forster would have put it.

The incidents of the parrot and the cobra are miraculous to the modern mind, but they are completely in line with the medieval thinking and belief. They must have been a source of the sentiment of wonder to charm the audience.

The conflict in the mind of Vailochana is well brought out. The treatment of inner conflicts of Vailochana, Padmini and Nanda gives to the story interesting psychological insights. The tale

proves the universal truth that the good always wins over the evil in the end. It is written in *dohara*, *chopai* and *chhappa*. The work has 632 verses in all.

Udyama-Karma-Samvad

The story, as the title suggests, is written in the dialogue form. The dialogue here is meant to prove the superiority of *Udyama* (industry) over *Karma* (fate).

There are two characters : Shivasharma, a brahmin scholar, and Kamakala, a courtesan. Shivasharma was in his previous birth a *dev* (god) in the court of Indra, and Kamakala was an *apsara* (a celestial damsel). Afflicted with a curse they were born as Shivasharma and Kamakala on the earth.

The story develops through the dialogue between Shivasharma and Kamakala. Shivasharma tries to establish the superiority of fate, while Kamakala of industry. In the end the *panch* (jury) passes the verdict that fate works through industry and *vice versa* Shivasharma and Kamakala, in the end, recollect their previous births; they marry and re-enter paradise.

The story is made interesting by the insertion of other minor stories and episodes. Shamal, here deals with a serious subject with ease. The story reminds of one of Tennyson's poem 'Two Voices' for its serious subject-matter and its mode. It is a reflective story with mythological elements.

V

Longer Works

Shamal has written two longer works '*Simhasanabatrishi*' and '*Sudabahonteri*'. These are collections of thirty two and seventy two stories respectively. Shamal's talent as a story-teller is seen at its best in these works, which in terms of success and popularity remained unsurpassed in medieval literature.

Simhasanabatrishi

Shamal wrote *Simhasanabatrishi* in two stages and at two places. He composed the first fifteen stories of the said work at Venganapur, before he was invited by Rakhidas in 1729 to stay with him. The remaining seventeen stories were composed during his stay at Simhuj between 1729 and 1745. Thus this is a collection of 32 stories. The last and 32nd story is named *Vetalapachisi* and it again comprises of 25 stories.

The hero of *Simhasanabatrishi* is Vikram, the just, benevolent, and philanthropic king. Bhoj, the king of Dharanagari in the Paramar dynasty once happened to discover a throne with 32 dolls fixed to it. This was the throne which originally belonged to king Vikram. King Bhoj intended to sit on the throne, but as soon as he proceeded to sit on it, a voice was heard bidding him to stop. To his astonishment he found that one of the dolls had spoken. And then the doll starts telling him a story about king Vikram. Each doll, in turn, tells a story and thus prevents King Bhoj from occupying the throne. The gist of each of the stories is that unless king Bhoj acquires the good qualities of king Vikram he should not sit on the throne.

The titles of these 32 stories are as follows :

- (1) Munja-Bhoj ne chamatkari Timbo — Simhasanni utpatti-katha (Munja-Bhoj and the miraculous mound—The Story of the Discovery of the Throne)
- (2) Apkarmi Kunvari (The self-made Princess)
- (3) Devkamal
- (4) Simhal Deshni Padmini (Padmini of Simhal)
- (5) Panchadand (Five Staffs)
- (6) Abola Rani (The Mute Queen)
- (7) Parakayapravesh (Transmigration of a Soul)
- (8) Dhanvant Sheth
- (9) Hamsa ne Purushno bhog leti Kunvari (The Princess asking for Man's and Swan's sacrifice)
- (10) Gardhabhsen (The Donkey King)
- (11) Char Chor (Four Thieves)
- (12) Vikramcharitra (The Story of the King Vikram)
- (13) Panchratna (Five Jewels)
- (14) Vikram ane Jati (Vikram and the Yogi)
- (15) Popat ane Mena (The Parrot and the Mena)
- (16) Triyadeshni Padmini (Padmini of the Women's Land)
- (17) Avichari Sodagar ne Raktapitiyo Raja (The thoughtless Merchant and the Leper King)
- (18) Vahan (The Ship)
- (19) Bhabharam
- (20) Vetal Bhat (A Bard Named Vetal)
- (21) Pan (The Betel-leaf)
- (22) Kamdhenu (A Heavenly Cow Yielding All Desires)
- (23) Bhadra-Bhamini
- (24) Gotako
- (25) Dukhi Rajkunvar (The Unhappy Prince)
- (26) Madhavanal—Kamkandala
- (27) Lakshabuddhi
- (28) Mena-Popat (The Mena and the Parrot)
- (29) Stricharitra (The Doings of Women)
- (30) Bharathari
- (31) Rupavati
- (32) Vetalpachisi (Twenty-five stories of Vetal)

Shamal has exploited here the sources of the Vikram narrative in old Gujarati and in Sanskrit. The noted scholar Agerton has discussed the recensions of *Simhasanabatrishi*, and he calls them *Dakshini Laghu-Pandiyamaya*, *Jain* and *Varruch*. Agerton is of the opinion that the origins of Shamal's *Simhasanabatrishi* may be found in the *Dakshini* recension of *Simhasandwatinshika*, while other believe that the origins of some of the stories of *Simhasanabatrishi* may be found in Kshemankar's Jain recension, in Somdeva's *Kathasaritsagar* and in Shubhshilgani's *Vikramcharitra*. Thus, Shamal has adopted the motifs for his *Simhasanabatrishi* from Sanskrit. Prakrit and other medieval popular fiction and tried successfully to weave stories in his own way.

In some of the stories Shamal has borrowed his plots from sources in the Rajasthani language as well. At times as in the stories of Panchdand, Lakshabuddhi and others the source lies in folk-tales. The 19th story, *Bhobharam*, is however, Shamal's own creation. Shamal has immortalised his patron Rakhidas in the story *Bhabharam*. He has praised the *kanabi* (the peasant) showing his importance among all other classes of the society. His free and open nature, his vow never to beg, his hard-work, his God-fearing attitude and such other qualities are specially highlighted. He shows king Vikram acknowledging the importance of the *kanabi*, the peasant. This is a sign of his respect for the *kanabi*. The following verse from the story of *Bhabharam* shows Shamal's love and partiality for the Kanabi i.e. the Patel or the peasant :

‘ Patel pas padsha, ap jaine kar jode,
Patel pas pandit, jachava jai jas jode,
Patel pas sau grass, man mikine mage,
Patel pas lakhpati, lalache paye lage.’

(The emperor goes to the Patel and folds hands in salutation, the scholar goes to the Patel to beg by composing the verse in his praise, every-body, leaving pride aside, begs for food from the Patel; the millionaire bows down to the Patel's feet out of greed.)

Vetalpachisi appears as the 32nd story of *Simhasanabatrishi*. It comprises of 25 stories and one more as an introductory tale, where we can find Shamal's originality. Shamal has drawn his inspiration for these stories from works written by several writer in old Gujarati and in Sanskrit. He has selected brief and enigmatic plots from earlier works and developed them in his own way. The story has 2714 verses in all. Thus *Simhasanabatrishi* is considered to be one of the best works by Shamal.

But inspite of its popularity and success as an interesting work, one can see that its plot-construction is loose and characterization flat. From the very title it seems that the thirty two stories must have some logical and definite order, but in fact all these stories are independent and self-sufficient.

While writing *Simhasanabatrishi* Shamal must have had some plots of earlier works in view from Sanskrit and other languages; but he has not followed any one in detail. Whereas the theme of *Simhasanabatrishi* is not Shamal's own; the way in which he has treated the story is undoubtedly his own.

Sudabahonteri

Sudabahonteri was composed in 1765, and this was Shamal's last work. Its main source is *Shukasaptati* in Sanskrit. The first and the last stories in the work are Shamal's own additions. Shamal has dealt here with women of loose character from different walks of life. All these heroines of Shamal are free in their behaviour and have illicit relations. Nevertheless they are clever enough to be fool their husbands, in-laws and relatives. The way these women successfully fool the rest is the main source of comedy. The laughter is sometimes very broad and is meant mainly for Shamal's illiterate audience. These stories must have been very popular in those days. The trickery of these women interests the modern reader as it is cleverly performed. Shamal described their illicit affairs with a great deal of zest and frankness, and some of the details tend to be pornographic. This made Narmad, well-known as the first modern writer and critic in Gujarati, to remark that Shamal

would better not have written these stories at all. A critic of an orthodox turn is reported to have said that *Sudabahonteri* may better be consigned to flames. A more enlightened critic like Navalram Trivedi, however, considers it very useful for scholarly study from language and sociological point of view. But at the same time Navalram would caution the lay reader to keep away from the immoral ways portrayed in the stories. The gist of one story from *Sudabahonteri* would suffice here to show its crudity and immorality.

Champali, a flower-girl, is the wanton heroine of the 22nd story of *Sudabahonteri*. On one occasion she arranged to meet her seven lovers during the same night, and she gave to each lover a separate appointment. But it so happened with the lovers that each of them arrived before the previous one had left. Her legitimate husband was the last to arrive, and she managed to hide the seven lovers in the house. She cleverly handled the situation. The *rajgor* (the royal priest) who was asked to hide himself under the cot, broke wind and fouled the air. Champali said to her husband that it must be the foul smell of a dead rat. She picked up the bag in which the *rajgor* was hiding and took it outside the house, thus remove one of her seven lovers from the scene. Her husband, then, sat down to have his dinner. She put the bowl of *ghee* near the *Kothi* (a big cylindrical container for grain) in which one of the lovers was hiding. As the bowl of *ghee* was hot, the lover hiding in the *Kothi* was hurt. So he gave out a loud gasp. Talati (the head of the village) who was hiding himself on the top of the *Kothi*, hearing this sound took it for the hissing of a female cobra. Talati was so much scared that he urinated instantly. Finding the urine trickling into his dish, Champali's husband thought it to be a trail of *ghee*. He lifted his hand and protested that his loving wife was pouring too much *ghee* in his dish. While making this gesture his hand touched Talati, who had perched himself on the top of the *Kothi*. The lover was frightened thinking it was indeed the female cobra reaching closer to him. He gave out a cry and jumped down. Taking this opportunity the rest of lovers also sneaked away. At this point Champali by using her presence of mind

saved the situation. She turned the tables on her husband by suggesting that all this noise was probably made by the spirits of his ancestors who were not properly offered libations, and were therefore unappeased. Her husband was a simpleton, so he took her words to be true and decided to make up for his omission and offer libations to the manes. Champali, in this way, made a fool of her husband and saved a difficult situation, like a typical Shamal heroine.

In telling these stories of wantons Shamal aims at edification. His message is that men should keep away from illicit and immoral relations. Shamal uses low language in order to catch the ear of his rustic audience. The crudity of his language and excess of the erotic element in the narrative are in accordance with the popular tastes of his times. These elements have offended critics with a puritan outlook, who tend to debunk Shamal's achievement. But Shamal himself is not alone to blame here, for he shared these features with much of the medieval oral and folk literature. One may say in Shamal's defence that he simply shows here his leaning towards a realistic rendering of the basic instincts and appetites which govern man's behaviour. *Sudabahonteri*, despite its flaws, is a work of enduring appeal.

VI

A Critical Assessment

Kavi Dalpatram was the first to launch the debate as to who was greater—Premanand or Shamal. While there were others who put forward the claim for Premanand's superiority. Dalpatram himself showed a preference for Shamal. No serious and sincere student of literature today would hesitate to disagree with Dalpatram. But this is not to under-estimate Shamal. Shamal's due has been warmly granted to him by almost all critics, old and new.

It is generally accepted by all critics that Shamal's works are not original in the strictest sense except some of his stories like *Bhabharam*. Like other medieval writers he was on one hand dependent on his Jain and non-Jain literary sources, while on the other on the folk-literature. But his originality lies in his art of story-telling.

Here we may recall the beginning of his tale *Madana-Mohana* which resembles the pattern of beginning in Chatrabhujdas's *Madhu-Malati* and Gyanacharya's *Bilhan-panchashika*. Dr. Harivallabh Bayani, the noted scholar of Medieval Gujarati literature, believes that Shamal might have devised the beginning of the *Madana-Mohana* on the pattern of the beginning of the above-said earlier works *Madhu-Malati* and *Bilhan-panchashika*.

In the beginning of *Madana-Mohana*, as we have seen before, Mohana, the princess, is shown receiving the lessons from Shukdev, the pandit, with a curtain between her and the teacher. The devise of keeping curtain between her and the teacher was

made with a view to hide their identity from each other having given to understand that the princess is blind and the teacher is a leper. But one day there was a conflict between princess Mohana and the teacher. Her teacher gave her a riddle to solve which created a hot discussion between the two regarding the solution.

Madana, the son of the minister, who happened to be there, declared that both the teacher and Mohana were correct regarding the solution of the riddle. On hearing that Mohana took off the curtain and seeing Madana fell in love with him at the first sight.

The similar episode is narrated in a slightly different way in the beginning of Gyanacharya's *Bilhan-panchashika*. Prithvichandra the king engaged Bilhan the pandit as a teacher to continue the studies of his daughter Shashikala, as her former teacher had died before the completion of her studies. The king issued an order to keep the curtain between Shashikala and the teacher who was told that the curtain would save the teacher from seeing the face of the blind princess. He also explained the device to his daughter that the curtain would prevent the wind from touching her body, as it may blow passing the body of the teacher who was suffering from leprosy.

One day, after a month, the teacher was explaining a riddle to the princess Shashikala who failed to understand it which made the teacher angry. In his rage the teacher called her a blind Princess in a turn called the teacher a 'leper', and added that what she has been taught was already available in writings. Bilhana did not take much time to understand the situation. He wrote two erotic verses on the paper and threw it over the curtain to test the princess, who took off the curtain after reading those verses, and they fell in love with each other.

If we compare the beginning of Shamal's *Madana-Mohana* with those of Chatrabhujdas's *Madhu-Malati* and Gyanacharya's *Bilhana-Panchashika*, we would find that Shamal had followed the same scheme of arranging the curtain between the teacher and

the student. But in *Madana-Mohana* the love episode takes place between the minister's son Madana and Mohana, the princess. Here the love affair is not straight away between the teacher and the student as Madana was not the direct student of Shukdeva, the teacher. Accidentally Madana happened to be there while the conflict regarding the solution of the riddle was going on between Mohana and Shukdeva. He intervened at the moment and said that Mohana and Shukdeva both were correct. Mohana suddenly took off the curtain and saw Madana for the first time and she fell in love with him.

Thus, Shamal made a slight change in the borrowed pattern of the beginning of the tale. The change is significant as it makes the story more convincing and interesting. Thus one can realise Shamal's creative insight in making necessary changes into the borrowed plots and patterns.

Poet or Story-teller ?

It is often mistakenly believed that one who writes in verse is necessarily a poet. To such minds verse is a synonym for poetry. If Shamal has to be called a poet it could only be in this sense. But if one tries to seek other poetic qualities in Shamal, he would conclude that Shamal is lacking in them. Shamal cannot be credited with high imaginative power, and it is seen that he cannot treat various *rasas* so well as Premanand could. It is obvious that he wrote the stories in verse because in those days prose was not much developed. Had he been born in the age of prose, he would have chosen prose instead of verse for his tales. His main interest was in building up a rich narrative plan and poetry was of incidental value to him. He was aware of his limitations and never claimed to be a poet. Only at some places in his works he uses the epithet *Kavi* for himself, and this too only in a traditional sense. Shankarlal Shastri has rightly remarked that he is more a story-writer than a poet.

His Art of Narration

Shamal's originality lies in adopting the form *padyavarta*. He surpassed his predecessors by giving a new artistic dimension

to this form. Very often his plots are taken from Sanskrit, Prakrit and folk-literature. But it is in rendering these tales a new, he shows his true creativity. He begins telling his tales in a direct manner, and carries it forward in the same manner till the end. For his tales Shamal selects plots which are simple and brief, but he extends them by adding many episodes and riddles. He is fond of the didactic form of verse called *Chhappa*, and it recurs in his tales. His tales sometimes become complex because he frequently uses the device of weaving a story within a story. But the sequence of incidents and episodes is arranged in such a way that the interest of the reader is sustained till the end.

The obvious quality of Shamal's language is that he puts much emphasis on spoken word. This is because he is the master of the art of retelling. No one before Shamal had reached the height he scaled.

Shamal was a story-teller by profession, and so he cared much for the spoken word. Shamal's tales are, in this sense, meant more to be heard than read. Here we find him exploiting the music of the language. Thus this is the poetry of 'resonance' as John Hollander would call it. Shamal should be seen in relation to the oral tradition; he was more of a story-teller than a story-writer.

His Language

Regarding his language, Shamal writes in *Madana-Mohana* :

*Sadi bhasa, sadi kadi, sadi vat-vivek;
Sadaman shiksha kathe, te ja kavijan ek.*

(He is a good poet who writes in simple language, in simple verse, a story which is simple and told with discrimination, and he conveys his teaching in a simple manner.)

This is Shamal's concept of good poetry, and in his practice as a poet he is faithful to it. His vocabulary is simple and easily accessible even to the least educated of his listeners or readers.

This simplicity of his language sometimes tends to crudity, and might offend a more refined taste. Shamal, however, is here to be seen in the context of his age, and especially of the folk tradition which he had inherited. Above all he was here influenced by his rustic audience.

In certain episodes we find Shamal varying his language according to his character and situation. The language of Shamal is not rich in imagery and poetic suggestion, and sometimes sounds prosaic.

The figures of speech in Shamal are mainly based on words or sounds and not on meaning. The beauty of onomatopoeia and its pleasant effect can be seen in the following examples :

*Tham tham chale chamak shun, jhamjham vage jher;
Gham gham vage ghughara, kam tani samsher.*

(From : Udyam-Karma Samvad)

*Ramjham ramjham ramjham karati, ghani ghughari gaje ma,
Tham tham tham tham thamaka karati, vinchhava anavat vaje ma.*

(From - Sudabahonteri)

To create the effect of beauty, Shamal uses collections of words such as *tham tham* (suggesting the gait), *jhamjham* (suggesting the sound of anklets), *ghumghum* (suggesting the sound of bells). Similarly in the second verse *ramjham ramjham ramjham* and *tham tham* to suggest the sounds of anklets and such other ornaments.

Generally his images are drawn from his observation of day-to-day practical life e.g.

Drushte drushti jyare mali, paya madhye jyam sakar bhali
(When their eyes met it was like sugar dissolving in milk.)

Tenun rup te kona ja kale, jem hiro kundanman bhale
(Who would fathom her beauty, a diamond set in gold ?)

Ghada jevadun stri chhe ratan, jhajhan karavan tehne jatan

(Woman is a jewel as large as a pot, and that needs all your care.)

Jugatun jodun paranashe, jyam sakar ne khir.

(A proper couple, the two perfectly suited to each other will be wedded; as sugar and milk mix with each other.)

He, sometimes uses Sanskrit, even false and ostentatious Sanskrit.

At times his language shows the traces of Hindi, as is illustrated by the following lines from his earlier work *Angadvishti* :

Guj kede avagun kare, e papiki rit;

Avagun kede gun kare, te ja rudani rit.

(A sinner is one who does a bad turn for a good one, and a virtuous man is he who does a good turn for a bad one.)

Here the use of 'ki', the termination of possessive case, indicates the influence of Hindi. Besides, one can see the use of Vraj bhasa in Shamal's works.

Phulki mala bani ik sundar, hathme phul liye ju khari hai;

Phulki sari, phulki chori, phulmen bas hai.

(A beautiful garland is made of flowers, she is standing with flowers in her hand; her sari is made of flowers and her choli (bodice) too; the flowers are fragrant.)

He has also made use of Persian words very freely and frequently. His language has the simple charm of his times.

His Verse

Shamal is indeed a good versifier. Unlike Premanand, he has used metres like *dohara*, *chopai*, *rola* and *ullala*. In his earlier works like *Angadvishti* and *Ravana-Mandodari-Samvad* he has made use of metres like *Jhulana*, *Soratha*, *Savaiya* and *Kavit*. At all the places his handling of metres is elegant and marked by a fine control of rhythm which turns into musical effect. Shamal shows mastery in his handling of rhymes, and makes the stanza compact and the expression effective.

As Keshavram K. Shashtree, the scholar of old Gujarati Literature, says, Shamal uses the *Chhappa* form of poetry to great effect especially when he wants to convey something forcefully. His *Chhappas* are typical in structure. Unlike *Akha Bhakta*, the master of *Chhappa* form, Shamal's *Chhappa* has the first four lines of *Rola* metre, and the last two lines of *Ullala*. He, generally, puts his epigrams in *chopai* and *dohara* metres.

In its movement his verse is simple in keeping with his language, and tends sometimes towards a monotony of effect. There is no variety of metres in him. He does not use various *dhalas* (tunes) as Premanand and others do. This simplicity of his verse only conforms to his own ideal of good poetry which, as we have seen earlier, should in essence be simple. His verse shows vitality in its descriptive passages and didactic phrases. At times the verse becomes a fine vehicle for Shamal for making proverbial statements.

Characters and Characterization

Many of Shamal's characters are product of his observation of his society. He has a vast range of characters chosen from different walks of life. In Shamal's world we meet the king and the ministers, the master and the servant, the *brahmin* and the *chandal*, the merchant and the peasant. There are characters from the artisan class too : the carpenter, the potter, the mason, the *brazier*, the cobbler, the stone-cutter and others. He has also selected some characters from various crafts, characters such as the washerman, the gardner, the shepherd, the *vanazara*, the textile-printer and others. In terms of the social system prevalent at the time, Shamal has given a full and comprehensive picture covering almost all castes with their various sub-groups such as *brahmin*, *vanik*, *rajput*, *kathi*, *patel*, *jat* etc. Further in choosing characters. from the animal world, such as the parrot, the myna, the swan and the cobra, and using them as narrators, he shows the influence of the Hindi mythology and of old folk-tradition.

Shamal's characters are remarkably free from inhibitions. They are often adventurous, rash, clever, lusty and greedy. Some

of them are grateful and some ungrateful. Thus they are of various categories, of various classes and various capacities. They are of good as well as bad qualities. Thus he creates a wide picture gallery.

It is usually acknowledged that Shamal's women characters are more clever and resourceful than his male characters. Professor Anantrai Rawal has rightly observed that his female characters seem more brilliant, clever, active, and attractive than his male characters. Shamal's female characters remind us of Kanaïyalal Munshi's female characters for their superiority over male characters. Professor Rawal remarks that Shamal has the habit of marrying off his heroines before they can fully assert themselves and show their full potential.

These female characters are again drawn from different classes and ranks of the society. There are women who are determined not to marry at all and yet they marry in the end. There are women who fall in love at first sight as is the case with Mohana of *Madana-Mohana*. There is the other type of heroine who wants to commit suicide on hearing the news of the death of her husband or would be husband as one can see in the first story of *Vetalpachisi*. There is a lady like Umade who has a flying magic wand i.e. *udandand*, and by hard penance wins the favour of the *Shaktis*. Mohana of *Madana-Mohana* is another typical lady who goes in man's guise with her husband in banishment and marries five other ladies from different parts of the country. On the one hand we have a lady like Devdamani who is very proud, on the other, we have a lady like Kamakandala who is very modest. There is a sati like Padmini of *Nandabatrishi* as well as a wanton lady like Champali, the flower-girl, of *Sudabahonteri*. There are also queens, princesses and dancers among them.

Most of these women characters are fond of riddles, and use the riddle as a test for making their matrimonial choice. They do not like to marry persons who are less intelligent. It might seem that his female characters are overly dominant. Govardhanram

Tripathi has rightly remarked, "Shamal's women are not illiterate and secluded fools". Shamal's female characters are thus more lively than his male characters. Each of them stands for the one or other good or bad human quality e.g. Bhamini of *Bhadra-Bhamini* is an idol of chastity, Mohana of *Madana-Mohana* is an idol of adventure, Sulochana of self-sacrifice and Champali of wantonness.

Critics observe that though Shamal's women characters are superior to men, he is not sparing in his criticism women as such. This view, however, is one-sided. A close study of his works proves that he has high regard for women. It can be admitted that in expressing at places a low opinion of women, Shamal is simply reflecting the feeling of the contemporary society through them. At one place he says :

Chhe nich koik ja nario, swabhawe nahi sahu Sarakhi

(May be a few women are mean, all are not similar in nature)

This possibly is Shamal's own feeling.

Despite his wide range of characters, Shamal is not a master of the art of characterization. His characterization is always simple and hardly subtle. There may be one or two exceptions when we find a 'round' character like Vailochana of *Nandbatrishi*. Most of his characters are static and not dynamic. One would feel that his characters act and behave like puppets. We cannot see the growth and development of the characters in Shamal's works. So his characters become types and do not have their individuality except in a few cases. This happens perhaps because his main interest is in furthering the plots of his stories.

Descriptions

Shamal does not always display the same interest in detailed descriptions as does Premchand. Very often, he excels in the descriptions of his characters. But here again he contents himself with an external and traditional mode. The descriptions of his heroes and heroines are not minute or live. His descriptions are often presented in current and conventional phraseology, and therefore lack freshness. They do not, many a time, become an

internal part of characterization. He does not have the fine descriptive power of a Premanand to create vivid characters and word pictures of places, things or incidents. He is, no doubt, a master of narration, but fails as a descriptive artist.

Riddles

The chief aim of Shamal was to entertain his audience; and one of the ways he sought to fulfil it, was to insert riddles in his stories. Riddles are used mainly by his heroines to test the intelligence of the hero. Sometimes the riddles are simple and superfluous and serve no purpose in the development of either plot or character. One of his riddles is given below to convey some idea of his vein here :

*'Jal vachche jivant, nahi medak nahi machchhi;
Chodas e chalang, nahi pashu ke pakshi,
Lakshmi Lilalaher, nahi raja e rani.
Taran taran e tattva chhe, budatane jhale bahu;
Te par tarashe palakman, Shamal kahe samajo sahu'.*

(It lives in water, but is neither frog nor fish; it moves in all directions, but is neither beast nor bird; it has an abundance of riches, but is neither king nor queen. It is an element to help one swim and it does a world of good by saving one from drowning. It would ferry you across in a moment. Shamal asks everybody to make out the meaning of it.)

This riddle poses a question to the audience and makes each of them think for an answer. The answer to this riddle is 'ship.'

Here I would like to quote one more example of a riddle from *Madana-Mohana*. Shukdev, the teacher, asks Mohana :

*Ketaki patra samakara, narinan tray-akshara;
Ade 'Ka' ne ante 'ri', te jane te pandita.*

(Its shape is like the leaf of Ketaki, the word is of feminine gender and is composed of three letters. It begins with 'Ka' and ends with 'ri'. One who knows this word is pandita.)

Mohana replies :

*'Kamini kehe, 'kehevun kashun, kahi tame katra;
Bijun puchho budhya thaki, nishche kahun nirdhar'.*

(The beautiful lady says, 'whatever you said, it is about Katra. Ask me intelligently about something else. I will definitely reply.')

Shukdev, the teacher, offers the riddle to Mohana to be solved and thereby to test her wits. Mohana solves the riddle saying that the teacher has asked about the word *Katari* (knife), which is very easy for her to find out the solution. So she further tells him to ask some intelligent riddle.

Such riddles were meant to provide a type of entertainment by Shamal to his audience with a view to sharpen their wits.

Parables

Shamal is fond of weaving parables in his main plots. He inserts a parable in the story to delight his audience on one hand and to bring out the mystery of the episode or to instruct his audience on the other. One comes across six such parables in *Madana-Mohana*.

One of these parables features the lioness as the heroine or the beloved and the deer as the hero or the lover. The lioness who lived on a mountain near the Himalayas, once went to a forest in search of a prey. She saw a handsome deer resting and was attracted towards him. The deer began to tremble on seeing the lioness, but she embraced him and expressed her love. The deer warned her by saying that it is not proper to love some one belonging different or unequal class. But the lioness did not pay attention to his warning and took him to her abode.

The lioness explained to the lion that she saw her brother (deer) in unrest in the forest and so had brought him with her out of pity. But the lion suspected their behaviour and planned to avenge. He asked the lioness to call all the relations of the deer, and to join them in joyous activities.

The lioness called a thousand deers who were then killed by the lion.

The parable throws light on the fact that love between two persons belonging to unequal classes of the society is not proper as in the case of Mohana, the princess, and Madana, the minister's son. By narrating this parable Madana wanted to warn Mohana not to express her love to him.

One of the six parables in *Madana-Mohana* is that of love-affair between the princess and the untouchable. The parable is narrated by Shukdev Pandit, the teacher of the princess Mohana. To persuade her that the love between Madana and her was improper because of their unequal social status. Shukdev narrated the parable of the princess of Damalpur falling in love with the unknown merchant who met her at the temple of Shiva. She asked the rich merchant about his caste and family. The merchant carelessly said that he was of low caste and she of high. But the princess blinded by love gave her heart to the merchant inspite of the warning of her friends not to do so, and she left the city with him to his home.

Reaching the merchant's home, she saw there one lady, six children and some looms. She came to know that the merchant was an untouchable. She was much angry with him and asked him to leave her back to the temple. But the merchant told her that he was not responsible for bringing her with him. He added that she had eloped of her own accord, if she did not want to stay with him, she might go back. On hearing the words of the merchant, the princess fevered with anger drew the knife and stabbed him and herself.

The parable conveys that one should not indulge in reckless enterprise resulting even into death. The parable is just to persuade Mohana not to fall in love with Madana, as they are not of equal status and equal class.

This parable has a parallel in the folklore. There is a similar story of Rajal and Vajsurvalo. When Rajal was working in a

field, she saw the horseman named Vajsurvalo. He wore golden rings and a golden necklace. She fell in love with that handsome horseman at first sight. She proposed him to marry her and Vajsurvalo took her with him to his home where she saw a drum and a loom. She, then, came to know that Vajsurvalo was not a Rajput but an untouchable. She asked him to take her back to her field. But Vajsurvalo told her that it was she who had asked to take her with him; and so she might go back alone. On hearing these words, she became angry and picked up a crowbar lying there. She blew it on his head and pressed her tongue under her teeth and died.

One can see the changes made by Shamal in his parable. Thus Shamal derived much from Sanskrit, Prakrit and folklore many a times making number of changes.

Was Shamal a social reformer ?

Goverdhanram Tripathi, the stalwart of modern Gujarati literature, saw in Shamal a social reformer because in his thoughts and beliefs Shamal was a little ahead of his times. Goverdhanram spoke of him as under :

“ He wrote a large number of poems, all fiction, in which he constructed for his audience a new world of men and women who soared above the narrow-minded, and he blasted the social institutions of his countrymen....”

Govardhanram's remarks suffer from excess. Unlike him, critics as Navalram Trivedi, Kanaiyalal Munshi, Anantraï Rawal and others are of the opinion that Shamal inherited many things from his predecessors. Even the elements of his works which make him appear to be 'ahead of his times' do not wholly belong to him.

The society Shamal has depicted in his works is not in every detail his contemporary society. The stories of chivalry and love were meant to take his readers away into the new world which was

not Shamal's own creation but existed even earlier. Thus his stories in a sense show the elements of a romance. So any effort to find a full reflection of his society in Shamal is futile.

Shamal as a social teacher

Shamal was not a social reformer, but to some extent was a social teacher. The sayings of wisdom and didactic phrases of Shamal in his *chopai*, *dohara* and *chhappa* are a treasury of his teachings.

On reading his *chopai*, *dohara* and *chhappa* one would find that Shamal must have been a keen observer of the society in which he flourished. He had a wide-ranging knowledge of human nature and of the doings of the people of his times. A perfect society is an Utopia. Shamal's society too was not flawless. He made the flaws his targets but not with the enthusiasm of a social reformer. He also had imperfect human beings around him as is the common lot of any society at any time on the globe. As a member of a society which was largely medieval in outlook, he still kept close to his predecessors when it came to ideas and beliefs. It was the general practice of the medieval writers to indulge in didactic writing. Shamal was not an exception to the rule. He knew that vices like greed, jealousy, wantonness, idleness etc., are the universal enemies of man. So in his tales he showed the evil consequences of the vices in a direct manner. His intention was to teach people to beware of the vices. He positively taught them not only this but also the importance of money, learning, adventure, work and such other things of practical use. Thus his teaching consists more of practical wisdom than moralising.

Govardhanram has aptly remarked : " Shamal not only constructs in this way what must look like a society of fairy-land to his countrymen, but he also tries directly to dissipate the social superstition of the country and to preach positive practical lessons of life."

Shamal's didactic verses are collected in *Shamal-ratnamala*, *Shamal-satsai* and *Shamalna Chhappa*. Here are some specimens of his didactic verses :

*'Lakshapati to lakh, ditha nirmalya pramane;'
 Jay raynun rajya, rup pan rahe na tane;
 Kul pan hoy kalanki, jor jotamun jayu;
 Joban pan vahi jay, vansha nirvanshi thaye;
 Nahi raj chor ke agni bhaya, mag mukave bahu thaki;
 Sat purusho man manjo, sadvidya shubh sahu thaki.*

(Lakhs of millionaires are seen as mere weaklings; a king may come to lose his kingdom, beauty might be of little use when the moment arrives; one's lineage may be tainted with blemish, vigour may be lost, youth might be spent, one's family line may be wiped out entirely; let the wise men of the world take note that right knowledge alone is the best of all things, for neither stately power nor thieves nor fire can touch it, and it instils humility in many a proud man.)

*Nirdhan hoy ne jhajhu jame, pret kahi sau tane dame, '
 Nirdhan kare jo parnan kam, navaro kaheshe badhun gam.*

(If a man himself penniless and yet eats a lot, people will indeed taunt him as *pret* (ghost); if a man who is himself poor spends his time doing good to others people of the whole town call him *navaro*—good for nothing.)

*Panchamahabhutanan putalan, kachi kaya kud;
 Jal parpota jat jyam, mane sachi Mudh.*

(We are but clay-idols made of the five elements, our body is prone to corruption; the self is like a bubble of water, but the fool takes it to be true.)

*Karapi na khaye anna, karapi nav phere ange;
 Karapi na diye dan, karapi nav rache range;
 Karapi na mande jang, karapi nav sukhe sue;
 Karapi na poshe pind, karapi vhalun nav jue;
 Karakasari karapi kare ghani, jane je dhan khutashhe;
 Shamal khe, tasker agni ke koik hakam huntashe.*

(The miser eats not, wears no clothes, gives no alms, enjoys no life
He never gives a fight, and never sleeps at ease. He does not feed
his body and holds no one dear. The miser is ever stingy, thinking
he may run out of riches. Shamal says the riches will one day be
pillaged by thief or fire or king.)

Jane juvani jor, punyani vat na prichhe;

Jane juvani jor, Isha arth kani nahi ichhe;

Jane juvani jor, parstri upar priti;

Jane juvani jor, rudi nav rakhe riti;

Chhe jor juvani jehane, andh te ade ank chhe;

Shamal khe, chukya chatur nar, vanbuddhino sho vank chhe ?

(One who is full of the vigour of youth, would never, understand
the good, (he) would desire nothing in the name of God; (he) would
form an attachment with the wife of another person; (he) would
never behave well. One who is drunk with the vigour of youth is
indeed utterly blind; Shamal says even the wise ones have lapsed
on this path, what to talk of those who are wanting in wisdom.)

VII

Conclusion

There are nearly 26 works to Shamal's credit. Some of them are published and are acclaimed by critics. Govardhanram not only called him the "leading star of the 17th century", but also said that he wrote "pure and genuine" poetry. But the modern reader would not by any means call Shamal's poetry "pure and genuine". He is at his best telling stories. He knew the interest and the level of intelligence of his audience so well that he moulded old material into new shapes appropriate to their taste. Govardhanram rightly said, "He draws his plots from old Sanskrit works of fiction and from current legendary lore and creates an altogether new world out of his scanty material". He was the unsurpassed story-writer of his times. In him one would find some successful stylistic elements of oral tradition of story telling. Surely he was major writer of medieval literature. As a writer he aimed at entertaining his audience and was never self-conscious about his literary abilities and artistic endeavours. He was so modest that he never claimed to be a great writer.

The stories mostly run smoothly from Shamal's pen. He cleverly wove a story within a story which sways the reader into limpid and lucid flow of his style. He constantly kept his eye on his audience and for that he occasionally lapsed into low language and to the descriptions of episodes which were in doubtful taste. Shamal lacks brevity and unity for the same reason.

His *chhappas* are full of worldly wisdom and meant for the edification of his listeners. But at times the *chhappas* make the

story loose and uninteresting. He uses the same *chhappas* in different stories. If one judges the *chhappas* by themselves apart from the stories, he would be tempted to agree with Keshavram K. Shasthree who says that Shamal has rendered a great service by including didactic epigrams in his stories. And the riddles in the stories prove Shamal's intelligence, but their recurrence makes his stories often uninteresting. Hence his style becomes epigrammatic and enigmatic. His *chhappas* are indeed full of practical wisdom, but are lacking in vision.

It seems that on the one hand his audience was the source of inspiration and encouragement to him, while on the other, the same audience confined him to certain limitations. To entertain his illiterate listeners he sacrificed the sense of propriety and artistic form. Shamal should be best judged as a writer who like almost all writers of the medieval times believed in 'art for life's sake'. To apply a modern criterion to him such as 'art for art's sake' would be unfair to him. Occasionally he shows traces of vulgarity, but with all his limitations Shamal is a successful writer and enjoys more popularity than any other writer of his times. He is essentially a secular writer and this is one of the reasons why he is so popular.

Shamal was quite conscious of his dependence on preceding Sanskrit and Prakrit works and folk-lore as well. Referring to how he arrived at his individual creation, Shamal says at one place in '*Madana-Mohana*' Sanskrit *manhethi e shodhiyun, bhanyo dvij Gurjarbhash*.

(I searched it out from Sanskrit sources and I, the *brahmin*, rendered it into Gujarati language.)

In '*Simhasanbatrishi*' again he refers to how he drew on Sanskrit literature for his source : *Sauskrutmunthi Shodhiyun* (I searched it out from Sanskrit).

Thus Shamal does not lay claims to originality. He fully acknowledges his dependence on Sanskrit works like *Kathasaritsagar*, *Simhasandvatrinshina*, *Vetalpanchvinshati*, *Shuksaptati*, *Bhoj-*

prabandh, *Panchtantra*, etc. He also indebted to his Jain and non-Jain predecessors, who wrote in old Gujarati, like Asait, Bhim, Ganpati, Narapati, Shridhar, Madhusudan, Shivadas, Gyan-chandra, Hirkalash and Sanghvijay.

He is proud of being the writer of the masses. He has left a lasting impression upon the minds of the people of his district so much so that Govardhanram has recorded it in these words : It is noteworthy that village anecdotes and bandic narrations throughout the rural populations of Northern Gujarat still revel in quoting from, and in imitating, their beloved Samal Bhat. Shamal still remains, as Govardhanram puts it, " beloved Samal Bhat", not merely of North Gujarat, but of all the places where Gujarati language is spoken.

APPENDIX — 1
SHAMAL'S WORKS

1. *Angadvishti*
2. *Ravana-Mandodari-Samvad*
3. *Shivapurāṇ*
4. *Revākhaṇḍ*
5. *Rāṇchhōdjīna Shaloka or Bodanākhyāṇ*
6. *Draupadivāstraharaṇ*
7. *Vishveshvarākhyāṇ*
8. *Kalimāhatmya—Patai Rawalno Garbo*
9. *Shamal Ratnamala*
10. *Udyam-Karma-Samvad*
11. *Vinechatni Varta*
12. *Shukdevākhyāṇ*
13. *Sundar Kamdar*
14. *Bhojkatha*
15. *Pandarmi Vidya*
16. *Rakhidas Charitra*
17. *Chandra-Charitra*
18. *Padmavati*
19. *Baras-Kasturi*
20. *Madana-Mohana*
21. *Nandabatrishi*
22. *Sudabahonteri*
23. *Batris Putalini Varta*
24. *Abharam Kulina Shaloka or Rustam Bahadurno Pavado*
25. *Gulbankavali*
26. *Jahandarsha Badshah*

APPENDIX — 2

SHAMAL'S PUBLISHED WORKS

1. *Angadvishiti*
2. *Ravana-Mandodari-Samvad*
3. *Shivapurāṇ*
4. *Chandra-Chandravati* : Ed. Hira Pathak
5. *Padmavati*
6. *Madana-Mohana* : Ed. H. C. Bhayani
7. *Nandabatrishi*
8. *Simhasanbatrishi* : (*Batris Putalini Varta*)
 - (i) First 17 Stories — Ed. A. B. Jani
 - (ii) 18 to 22 stories — Ed. H. C. Bhayani
 - (iii) *Panchadanda* — Ed. M. R. Majumdar
 - (iv) Bhadra-Bhamini — *In Brihatkavyadohana Vol. 2*
 - (v) Vetalpachisi — Ed. A. Patel
9. *Sudabahonteri ni Varta*

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