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MEGHANI

V. J. TRIVEDI



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MEGHANI (1897 — 1947), acclaimed as a national bard, Shri Zaverchand Meghani gave voice to the ideals and aspirations of those who lived in what has come to be known in Gujarati literature as the Gandhi age. For more than a quarter of a century he continued to concretize in poetry all that India sought and stood for.

A novelist, a short story writer, and a collector and editor of folk-literature, Shri Meghani came to literature through journalism. In all these will be found the breadth of Shri Meghani's vision and imagination, his ability to portray vividly and above all the storm and stress the people suffered from. He was a social reformer who discarded all conventions, and his novels are conclusive proof of this. But his greatest work lies in the collection and editing of folk-literature, and in enriching it with numerous tales and anecdotes as related to him by the people. Add to this his rich and sonorous voice which enabled him to sing the songs he made—songs that literally captivated his audience. All this he did for the freedom of the nation. He saw, he sang and he conquered. To-day, Meghani lives in the memory of all those who knew him and who continue to read him as a national bard, unrivalled and unmatched.

The author of this monograph Sr. V. J. Trivedi is a noted ^{Y.} ~~literateur~~ ^{literary} of Gujarat. He has been working as a distinguished teacher of English literature since 1941. At present he is the Principal of Gujarat College, which is the premier institution of higher education in the state of Gujarat.

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MEGHANI

V. J. TRIVEDI

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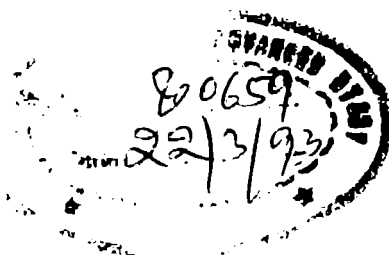
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INTRODUCTION

A thick-set person, with a white turban and white chudidars often walked the outskirts of the Ranpur town and was sometimes seen with white-bearded old men, light-of-steps young men, often taking shelter under a tree on a moonlit night outside the limits of the town. This thick-set man, plump, heavy-of-step had a rich, sonorous, vibrant voice which held spell-bound the people who heard him and shook them out of their lethargy. The village folk and the city dwellers who visited him were alike captivated when this quick-eyed, quick-perceiving white-dressed man sang songs of valour and courage, love and conflict, of social evil and of virtue, of battles long ago, of men and women who lived their lives in a simple, truthful, honest manner, songs that celebrated for them a rich heritage and a rich past, songs that enshrined a folk culture and a folk-literature which had been lost sight of for centuries by the people of the region. The singer who carried this burden of bringing to light forgotten outlaws, forgotten tales, and forgotten social virtues was none other than the indefatigable Zaverchand Meghani. On any day, one could find him moving in Saurashtra, collecting data, collecting people, collecting tales, a spirit intertwined with all that was noble and all that was strengthful. Meghani, the man, Meghani the journalist and Meghani the litterateur was an outstanding person. Rarely in Gujarati literature did a poet combine the art of singing with the art of research. No poet had ever toiled for folk-literature as did Meghani. No journalist had ever wielded a pen that roused an uneducated public to sacrifice everything for the independence of the country. No poet had ever sacrificed himself for the sake of the people. Such was Zaverchand Meghani who rightly became a national bard, though writing in a regional language. Born some seventy-five years ago, this was the very man who moved the people of Saurashtra and all Gujarati-speaking people emotionally and heroically, as no one

else had done before him or has done after him. Essentially a man of action and a man of emotion who did not boast of any great intellectual powers, he could certainly boast as few others can he influenced the people where many had failed although many had tried. Little wonder that he fulfilled, unlike Shelly himself. Shelley's famous dictum: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Give us poets like Meghani, and no national crisis can dishearten the people or can disembody them. Meghani remained till the end of his life a symbol of the heroic struggle, both on the national and on the private plane. But like all true great men he suppressed his private agonies and talked only of the public ones. And what he sang in public retains the truth of his genius.

MEGHANI'S LIFE AND WORKS

Zaverchand Meghani occupies a unique place in Gujarati literature. Having abandoned all the attractions of worldly power and position in obedience to the dictates of an inner view, he dedicated himself to writing and within two decades he poured book after book, and before he was struck down at the age of 50, by a sudden and severe heart attack, he had already produced 88 books which included novels, poems, short stories, heroic tales and criticism. In addition, as an indefatigable journalist, he continued to serve the country in various walks of life — be it political freedom from what was then known as Native States or the freedom of an individual or any social problem which required to be examined afresh. Born on 17th August, 1897, he breathed his last at Botad on 9th March 1947. He started writing before he was 25.

There are various methods to appreciate works of literature. One can relate the work to the author or relate it to the other works by the author, one's ultimate aim being to reach the mind of the author, his attitude and approach to life. However, relationship between the work of art and the author is extremely subtle and often it is dangerous to arrive at what the author is from what the book says. Since life is too subtle to be directly deduced from literature, one may be able to evaluate Meghani's works in terms of literary values but it will be difficult to evaluate the life of Meghani. It may be possible to know about his life from a valuable article by Dr. Umashankar Joshi or from what his friends have said about him, and from what is available in a biography by Prof. Kanubhai Jani. It may be interesting, in this connection, to know what Meghani has himself said with reference to his own life: —

"I did not have the courage to write my own autobiography if I write my own life it might look like a parody. In life there is more to be forgotten than to be remembered and

whatever is to be presented to the public is always meagre and in this also how much are we likely to be honest? Absolutely nil. Autobiography demands an ability, courage and confidence to put weaker links of life in a different perspective and in this your being at loss would not be acceptable. If this strength is not there silence is better." Meghani is a writer free from pretences. Even a casual reader of his letters would be convinced of the transparent sincerity of his personality. Whether in the rejection of the Presidentship of the literary section of the Gujarati Literary Conference at Rajkot, or in the rejection of the Mahida Prize for "Mānsai-nā Divā", or whether in looking for truthful opinion from Dr. Umashankar Joshi or Sundaram, or in the admitting of absence of any progressive step in his second marriage, ("I have not taken this step as a social reformer but I have only thought of our convenience.") or whether in the assertion in a lighter vein that it was difficult to be creative or original in his style all the while ("I am never original"), or that he was an ordinary graduate coloured by his own surroundings, having taken to writing as an honest occupation ("I am neither the thinker nor the creator — not believing that my pen would be able to produce pure literature abandoning political journalism."), Meghani always displays a rare example in literature of sensitive humility and objectivity. How many such have been in the world around us? Meghani rarely looked to his own sufferings; he was rather engrossed to the brim in giving speech to the sorrows of others.

In spite of all the restraint that one could exercise, it is difficult to avoid expression of one's sufferings and ideals and desires even in an indirect way. Thus one could imagine a sort of link between what the work is and what the author is likely to be. It may be possible with the advance of psycho-analysis to unravel the mystery of an author's mind in what he has expressed in his works.

Meghani's literary career starts from 1922 and ends with his death in 1947 — a span of 25 years. His literary career sums up what he experienced, thought and felt in the first 25 years of his life. Abandoning a successful career in an Aluminium factory at Calcutta, he devotes himself to writing more as a

MEGHANT'S LIFE AND WORKS

dedicated soul, having nursed himself ceaselessly and enthusiastically on the heroic tales of Saurashtra. Writing to a friend from Calcutta, he said that he would like to continue writing, writing all the while, though one wonders whether what he experienced during the period of his activity as a writer finds expression in his writing at all. For Meghani is not a subjective writer but one who lives objectively through his characters and what he writes.

Generally, in a work of art, the subjective elements preponderate, but in Meghani's works these get subjected. The same devotion to truth which prevented him from writing an autobiography and which made him call himself a rhymer is as much responsible for making him suppress the subjective elements of his personality as his devotion to heroism. This objectivity is the basic quality of Meghani's literature. An ardent devotee of folk-literature, he continued to nurse the same objectivity which is always apparent in any folk-literature of the world. However, an exception to this objectivity could have been found in the novels. But in his novels, Meghani is a silent spectator never giving in to personal feelings. The death of his first wife, the conflicts and constraints of a family life, the devotion to duty — all these made him a seeker and a lover of the human being so amply illustrated in his letters to Dr. Umashanker and his friends. He hungered for "human relationships", avoiding all differences of opinion and conflicts arising out of meetings, conferences, etc. with the people. To Meghani "value lies in love and not in greatness." "In the literary world I am not greater than what you are", says he to Dr. Umashanker, and "what I am searching for is not greatness but something else." Meghani sought personal relationships and viewed them apart from his opinions on the works of his friends. It is this same love for the human being that made him come into contact with outlaws and appreciate the vigour and the strength and the pride of their lives. This love of life in its perverted form could also have a touch of homo-sexuality, as shown in "Niranjan".

Melancholy is another characteristic of the author, a characteristic which made him feel that old age was on him faster than

he had expected. This melancholic spirit finds expression in a large number of his works and any reader would be touched by them. In spite of this melancholy, Meghani's ideal in literature was to depict a way of life supposed to be at variance with the life of the cultured people of the modern times. All his energies were devoted to expressing this preference. An ideal journalist, he avoided pitfalls natural to his profession. And he understood extremely well that cheap journalism could interfere with literature. And yet he carried on as a journalist in Saurashtra, mixing criticism and encouragement at the same time. His heart's desire was to produce pure literature and he was the first to produce first-rate folk-literature at a time when resources to collect it were negligible. His achievement as a researcher in and a collector of folk-literature stands in sharp contrast to what we, in modern days, with all the facilities available to us have achieved. Meghani, in spite of all his greatness, was always humble enough to acknowledge that he had played only a little role in the propagation of literature. Rather, he wished to be remembered as a writer of folk-literature only, if for nothing else, stressing all the while that whatever "littleness" there is in folk-literature was his "littleness". However, one may ask who will measure this littleness?

POETRY

Poetry, only, next to folk-literature was a major activity of Meghani's literary career, though it is difficult to definitely say what position Meghani occupies among the poets of Gujarati literature. However, as a novelist and short-story writer, he was accorded a high place by the critics of Gujarati literature. As a poet he fired the popular imagination and won people's hearts, but critics rarely gave him any significant place in Gujarati poetry. Prof. R. V. Pathak maintains that Meghani, with his poems on family life and on the struggle for freedom, is in the direct line of poets like Narmad and Khabardar. Prof. M. N. Jhaveri regards him as a poet who sang of the love of the motherland in all its tones and connotations. As the poet himself has sung "Lāgyo kasumbī-no rāṅga. ho rāja mane lāgyo Jananī-nā haiyāmām poḍhamtām, poḍhamtām, pīḍho kasumbi-no rāṅga" * This is the main theme of his poetry and the main fruit of his labours. Between 1925 and 1947 Meghani produced 10 collections of folk-songs and six volumes of songs. Of these, the most important are "Venī-nān Phul"(1928), "Kīlola"(1930), "Yuga-vandanā"(1935), "Ekatāro"(1940), "Bāpunān Pāraṇām" (1943), and "Ravindra-vīṇā" (1944).

These poems may not stand the test of time or they may not be regarded as achieving a perfection either of form or content, or they may not claim an eternal place in the hearts of the lovers of poetry because of their imaginative and sensuous impact; nor do they have any vision to offer. They are rather rhymed effusions, sincerely wrought and expressed in terms which would appeal to the common man. Meghani himself never

* O Friend! I have been intoxicated by the love for the heroic. I have drunk this heroic wine while rocking in the cradle of my mother's heart.

claimed to be a poet of a high order, but what he wrote incorporated the particular moment, the particular occasion, the particular sentiment and the particular person in such a way as would make the reader feel his historic importance and bard-like quality of his verse.

Rarely personal, Meghani's poetry is the voice of the people — their poverty, their suffering, their aspirations, their sorrow and their struggle. As the poet of the people, he subdued himself and gave expression to the objective reality that he saw, suffered and summed up in various ways, in various situations, through various persons and various contexts. These poems unfold on a national scale, all the miseries that India in general, and Gujarat in particular, suffered. And these poems captured the pulse of the people, and one could know through these songs the air that the people of this country breathed, the sacrifices that they made, the suffering they endured, the ideals they cherished, and the culture that was fast fading and the independence that they wanted to regain.

To do this, he learnt a great deal not only from his own expressions as a poet, but from the expressions of other poets in other languages of this country and in English. Not that he was faithful in his translations in some of the poems that he turned over in Gujarati. Not that he depicted all that he felt on reading these poems. He only took those sentiments, those opinions which suited him and which he could easily weave and shape in Gujarati poetry. Rather he borrowed in order to give it the colour that Sorath was full of and thus give it a link which would bind his poetry to the people. To illustrate, the famous "*Koi-no Lāḍakavāyo*" is based on "*Somebody's Darling*", "*Ākharī Sandeś'a*" is based on "*The News of the Battle*"; "*Sūnā Samādara-nī Pāle*" on "*Binjan on the Rhine*"; *Rātanān Phuladān*" on "*Fine Flowers in the Valley*." The English Ballad, its form and content, finds its parallel expression in the poems of Meghani. In fact the popular ballad was a major influence in his poetic make-up. This can easily be verified from "*Sīndhuḍo*", *Venīnān Phula*," "*Pīḍītonān Gīto*", "*Yugavandanā*" and "*Ekatāro*". Various critics have made it a

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point to draw attention to the fact that Meghani was a translator par excellence rather than an original poet. They have almost suggested that support had to be there which would provoke Meghani to either write an adaptation of the original or transform the original into his own. He worked as an alchemist but the gold on which he worked was always somebody else's. This is more apparent in his poetry than in his short stories and novels.

Unlike the poets of the past, who were occupied as if by love and nature lyrics, Meghani belongs to that band of the few Gujarati poets who could capture the spirit of the people in words which often inflamed their hearts. In such poems, the force of the spirit of the people matched happily with the force and choice of the words that the poet used. In this ability, Meghani had few rivals. And today he occupies a "niche" which would endear him to all those who loved valour, glory and the joy of living a life of independence suffused with ideals which the nation has always cherished.

"Bhaḍakebolyā s'abda jhajhalatā khuncatā kanthe kārī
Rasa nū vīra vahāvī s'ake e rasanā jalo amārī"¹
"Nathī jānyun amāre pantha s'ī āphata khaḍī che
Khabara che etali ke māta-nī hākala paḍī che"²

National events in the freedom-struggle like the "Jaliyanwala Bag" and the Round-Table Conference, which Gandhiji attended, or the poverty of the people found expression in Meghani's poetry, some of which could evoke tears in any sensitive reader. Thus lines like "Hajāro varsanī junī amārī vedanāo",³ or

¹ I have dipped my words in flames which hurt my throat. May our tongues (words) which can not produce 'Rasa' get parched.

² We do not know what obstacles lie in our path (for freedom). We know only the call of the Motherland. (For full text, see Appendix).

³ A thousand years' old are our agonies.

“Chello katoro jherano ā pī jajo Bāpu”,¹ or “Jāgo jaganān ksudhārti, jāgo darbala as’akta,”² could carry the the people and sway them in the direction the poet wanted. Meghani’s burning desire to serve the people and to assuage their suffering and help them fulfil their ideals made him refuse to write about nature or give expression to otherwise palatable lyrical moods. A poet of the soil, his poems reflected the preoccupations of the people in words which people felt and understood and in tones and tunes which people could appreciate and sing. The high and the low alike can sing these poems and enjoy the celebration of an occasion or the vagony of a spirited people or the all-sided love of the innocent people with a fervour which would excite them to a pitch of feverish activity. A large number of Meghani’s poems are action or thing-oriented or action or thing-imbued. They have the straightforward flow of a massive force whose masical beats one could hear with abated breath. To him the earth and the earthly, unlike the heaven and the heavenly, are more dear, are more akin to his soul. These poems thus have the music of the march of a people or the music of the popular ballads.

To say this is not to ignore some of the poems which deal with children, using a metre which is a popular tune. Works like “Veninān phūla” and “Killola” unfortunately have not had that attention which they deserve in any evaluation of the poet. These poems must find an important place in Meghani’s creations, for they show a direction which he did not develop, busy as he was with a large number of political and social issues. These poems would further illustrate the point that the poet could sing, if only he would, also of those pleasures which mothers and children would always enjoy.

¹ Drink O Bapu! this last drink of hemlock.
(For full text, see Appendix.)

² Awake the hungry, the weak of the world, awake

POETRY

To be a poet of the times may not mean a moment in history but not to be a poet of the time is not necessarily a virtue. The fact that after a lapse of more than 25 years of his death, Meghani is still one of the most popular poets in Gujarat is proof enough of his poetic abilities. He is the singer, he is the musical voice, he is the recorder, he is the very breath of the people around.

NOVELS

By 1932, Meghani, it might be said, was ripe enough to attempt the writing of novels, which was then the most popular form developing in Gujarati. Like many western authors in the 19th century, Meghani started serialising novels in newspapers, — a way which came easily to him because of his close association with journalism. Between 1932 and 1947, he wrote some 14 novels. Among the historical and social novels, “Nirañjana”, “Soratha, Tārān Vahetān Pānī”, “Vevīs’āla” “Rā Gaṅgājalio”, and “Prabhu Padhāryā,” are noteworthy.

His first original novel “Nirañjana” was published in 1936. However, in 1932, he had translated upto Sinclair’s “Samuel the Secker” under the title “Satyan; Shodhamin” a novel which voices the sufferings of the poor and the downtrodden and is reminiscent of the Gandhian era, which devoted itself to the uplift of the weaker sections of the society. The novel is replete with the misdeeds and the voluptuousness of the rich. The hero of the novel is an innocent villager who becomes a victim of the corrupt practices of the rich. The novel does not boast of any high achievement either in characterisation or in its social message. Its hero is not necessarily dynamic, and it is the exaggerated setting of the novel that attracts attention. The very choice of the American novel is an indication of the writer’s desire to propagate a social philosophy which was taking roots in the thirties in this country. One can safely say that the novel, which was a free-gift of the weekly “Phūla-chāba” that he was editing, remains a second-rate achievement. His second novel “Bīdelān Dvāra” is also a translation of Upto Sinclair’s “Love’s Pilgrimage.” The hero of this novel, Ajit is a literateur and falls in love with Prabha — an artist. They marry and the first years of their marriage were happy and contented. After the birth of the son, Prabha gets more and more engrossed as a house wife --- a fact which estranges the husband from her. She almost feels

NOVELS

attracted to another man and Ajit experiences the conflicts and contradictions inherent in an idealistic approach to life. There is probably an autobiographical element in this novel, and the agony that the hero experiences can easily remind us of the experiences of the author in his life. However, characterisation in this novel is a little more advanced, and but for the disjointedness of the various parts of the novel, it could have been much greater success. The third novel is a translation of Hall Caine's "The Master of Men" titled "Aparadh". It deals with a social phenomenon which is not necessarily uncommon. Shivraj, the hero, meets Ajwali, the heroine, and has a love affair with her which results in the birth of a child, which is killed — a crime which has to be tried and punished. Shivraj is the judge who knows that, if there is a culprit, it is himself. The passion which made him succumb to the physical lure exercised by Ajwali creates an agonising pain in his heart and he is in the position of one who knows his guilt but cannot declare it and at the same time cannot bear it. The fear of the fall from his social position makes it difficult for him to confess his guilt as also the feeling that such a confession would ruin Ajwali completely. Meghani uses the original more freely than he has hitherto done and some freedom in the manipulation of incidents and situation is apparent in the novel, although it could have been possible for him to make some situations more life-like and poignant. "Vasundharaṇāṇ Vahālaṇ Davālaṇ" the next novel, though modelled on Victor Hugo's "The Laughing Men" is a more free enterprise. Here the characters come from the lowest social order, and the novel is full of cruelty and uncivilised behaviour of the so-called civilised classes. The heroine also belongs to the lowest section of society. She falls in love with a rich man and becomes mother of a harelippered child. The novel depicts, for the first time in Gujarati, characters and situations which are easily found in the lower rungs of the society. The knife sharpener, the tattoo-marker, the comb-sellers and a host of others are a part of the novel. How many novelists could boast of the knowledge of such characters? Lack of touch with such characters is mainly responsible for the absence of genuine newness in the Gujarati novel. The false dichotomy between the so-called well-placed

and the socially backward was something which was anathema to Meghani. This novel traces a new path in novel-writing in Gujarati and therefore has a historical importance which cannot be gainsaid.

The novels published so far reveal the humanist in Meghani which made him seek valour, strength, character and glory among those peoples of the society which a supercilious social order had regarded as not worthy of attention. As in his search for folk-literature, so also in his search for the characters in his novels, Meghani's mission was to uncover the hidden depth of humanity which lay in the so-called lower order of the society. Meghani did all this, not because he was a follower of Gandhiji, but because his heart always felt that way.

It may be pointed out that the social novel that Meghani wrote as also his short stories, reveal to a great extent his attitude to certain age-old values in life. The story of the conflict between the East and the West is well-told in these novels. The desire to love the new and discard the old is very visible in most of them, but Meghani maintained that one can seek virtue, courage and humanity in the old as well. The new was not as rich as it was made out. It was also full of hypocrisy, selfishness and cruelty. According to one critic, the need for the approach that Meghani cultivated was always felt, and it was to Meghani's credit that he was the first among the Gujarati novelists to lay bare the worthwhileness of the old and the worthlessness of some of the new.

The social novel could always be a sounding board for the validity or otherwise of the cultural values at a given time in a given society. This is especially true of the way the social novel came to be written in Gujarati. In what is known as the age of Narmad, what otherwise was known as the age of 'reform', the ancient Indian values prevalent among the Gujaratis at the time were examined afresh. Some of the older values were retained, but a large number of them were questioned because they did not fit in a different kind of society. In the age that followed, the age known as the age of the "Pandits", Goverdhanram in his novels stressed the need to preserve certain ancient Indian virtues and also emphasised the need to have new values

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imbibed by the society. Meghani carried on this search for the new and the respect for the old, knowing fully well, as others did before him, that in every age there is a clash of values. But it is given to few to balance the old with the new. But the new must be not a passing phase but something which can be a permanent feature of social organisation and values. The new in Gujarat as in other parts of the country, was a direct result of the Western system of education and "The British Raaj". The tyros were carried away by the gloss of the western world. They rarely waited to balance the East and the West as did Narmad or Goverdhanram or Meghani. In "Tulsī-kyāro", "Nirañjana" and "Vevīs'āla", Meghani demonstrates amply the innate wisdom of the old as against the immaturity and selfishness of the new. In "Nirañjana" and "Tulsī-kyāro" the generosity, the softness and the courage of the old are contrasted with the selfishness and little-mindedness of the new. In "Vevīs'āla", the tycoon Champaklal's incivility is contrasted with the civility of Sheth Dipchand.

"Nirañjana" is one of the first novels which, shocking as it may sound, touches the problem of homosexuality in literature, and whatever be one's approach to this problem, one is struck by the conflict that the hero has with his colleagues in the college and the unabashed selfishness, weariness and inability to understand that which is human, however unsocial it may be, on the part of the so-called intellectuals called the professors. This conflict is in addition to usual conflict in Meghani's novels: the conflict between choosing a bride whose parents have a status and the bride who is in love with the hero. The final choice of the hero to marry the daughter of a Diwan of a State is proof enough of the hero's inability to stand by his true emotions and to show the courage of his convictions. As in Meghani's other novels, so also in "Nirañjana", there is a loose sense of construction and one misses the atmosphere in the novel, so easily noticeable in some of the novels which deal with the outlaws.

"Vevīs'āla" is an attempt to preserve the value of a promise in a society in which money becomes the criterion for all relationships. "Tulsī-kyāro" is one more example of Meghani's desire to touch social problems created by the entry of women in vari-

ous fields of work owing to the spread of Western education. Here, as elsewhere, the author demonstrates fully the inability of the modern woman to be circumspect, and the smallness of the modern man in the changing social pattern that is the reality for both. Abandoning the uneducated wife, Virsut marries a fairly sophisticated girl, Kanchan, who, not knowing what she is really about, almost becomes licentious, though she is protected by Someshwara, the father of the hero who becomes a symbol for age, courage and wisdom.

Whatever may be one's view about the causes of the birth of the novelist in Meghani, one feels certain that with the publication of "*Soratha, Tarān Vehetān Pāñī*" Meghani is in his true element. Here the very atmosphere and the life of the people of Sorath is revived with gusto and with force. The novel abounds in characters from various sections of the society, and their thought, their emotion and their movement are caught and depicted in the most natural way. The hills and the rivers and the very earth of "*Soratha*" seem to be participating in the novel.

The Gujaratis, through their trade and commerce, have settled at various places in South-East and West Asia and Meghani was very much concerned over the way the Gujaratis exploited their clientele. Though it may sound strange, Meghani raises a voice of protest against the exploitation of the people by the Gujaratis in the places of their settlement. Naturally, the soul of the humanitarian in Meghani revolted at this picture, and in "*Prabhu Padhāryā*" one finds him concerned with such exploitation.

As a historical novelist Meghani takes a place after Munshi and "*Dhumaketu*". His field is folk-tales and folk music and folk culture. In his historical novels "*Samarāṅgana*" "*Rā' Gaṅgajaliyo*" and "*Gujarātano Jaya*" Pts. I and II he merely takes the historical frame, but the development of the novel is more concerned with the desire to preserve the vitality of the old, its courage and its values. Thus in "*Samarāṅgana*" there is a mixture of history and folk-tale and the fortitude of the characters provides the lever for the progress of the novel. In "*Rā' Gaṅgajaliyo*" the story of Ra' Mandalik is woven with the story of the saint-poet Narsinh Mehta.

NOVELS

In the two volumes of "Gujarātano Jaya" a laudable attempt is made to show the love of the land, foresight and courage of those who governed and those who were governed. These novels record in no uncertain terms the glory of Gujarat in the 12th century on the basis of the evidence of the Jain Rāsās and Prabandhis. The portrayal of Vastupal and Tejpal, the two leaders who were responsible for the organisation and progress of Gujarat at that time, is achieved in a manner which makes the work interesting and forceful.

SHORT STORIES

As a journalist, to write short stories in the weekly that he conducted was a temptation which could easily come to Meghani. Meghani has tried to give a new form and new shape to folk stories and folk verses of Saurashtra.

In spite of having this sense of new form that a short story demanded when utilising folk-material, Meghani tried to remain as much faithful to his sources as was possible. In the five volumes of "Saurāstranī Rasadhāra" there are a hundred stories based on folk-life material, but from the point of view of art it is not possible to regard them as short stories. However, of these hundred, we can certainly regard at least 25 as cast in short story form and the rest may be regarded as life-sketches or tales dealing with certain situations. "Vera", "Dīkaro", "Dastā-veja*", "Paranetara", Ghodañ-nī Parīkṣā", "Aṇanama Māthān", "Olipo" etc. can be regarded as good short stories.

The first volume of short story titled "Citānā Angārā" was published by Meghani in 1937. Like the other novels of Meghani this collection of short stories is a realistic portrayal of the social environment of the times. As a critic has pointed out, these stories reveal the old customs and conventions of the people which require to be discarded, and Meghani comes down heavily upon such customs almost in the spirit of a propagandist. Probably the very times in which Meghani lived were responsible for the attitudes he adopted to some of the evils. The earlier part of the 20th century is full of a crusading spirit against ignorance and social evils and corruption. No wonder Meghani's art enthusiastically displays itself in exposing these evils. Pure art would require a delicate balance between exposition of social cant and the requirements of artistic form. But to a man like Meghani, wedded to social reform, it was not possible to keep such a delicate

* Translation of this story (page 1 to 7) page No. '43' (Appendix)

SHORT STORIES

balance either in his short stories or in his novels or even in his poetry. Travelling as a journalist and as one interested in folk-literature Meghani came into contact with people at various levels in the social hierarchy, and his blood always boiled whenever he saw suffering in any form or harassment by the rich of the poor. In "Saurashtra", Meghani always made an effort to cultivate the art of the short story even though in some of the stories in "*Citānā Aṅgārā*" there are facts lifted up from life itself. In these stories one finds a feeling-frozen husband, a heartless typical Indian mother-in-law and a suffering, tuberculosis infected, soft Chandan a rebellious, widowed Bhadra, heriocrally battling for marriage with a postman — Sadashiv, a blood-sucking, unscrupulous money-lender Kanji Sheth. The six short stories in which these characters appear graphically portray the society in which the lot of these men and women is cast. Reality is more than of life-size here. The two volumes "*Āpaṇā Uṃbarāmān*" and "*Dhūpa-chāyā*" are comparatively more mature collection of short stories. Here also the gallery of portraits is varied both in terms of temperament and in terms of profession. Here are to be found soldiers, petty shop-workers, farmers, house-hold servants and many other people of the lower sections. As in his poetry, so in his stories, the burden is the suffering of the poor. Though Meghani was influenced by Dhumketu, another eminent Gujarati short story writer, in dealing with the lower sections of the society, he was so merely because of having been motivated by an emotional attachment to the weaker sections of the society.

One can see the mature artist in Meghani operating in these stories, shedding off emotional outburst and sentimentality which were a characteristic of his earlier work. Collecting only the really artistic ones, Meghani published two volumes of short stories. Selecting from among his earlier works, "*Lok-Milap*" published in 1972, a collection of 17 stories, the best ones from earlier works like "*Kurbānī-nī Kathāo*" (1922), "*Pratimāo*" (1934), "*Palakārā*" (1935), and "*Vilopana*" (1946).

However, two charges are levelled against Meghani, the one being about a certain monotony of tone and worship of the past and the second of exaggeration and hyperbolism. A critic

has called Meghani a trumpeteer of the past. Further, it is easily found that he loves more the old accounts-clerk and school-teachers than the modern professors whom he exposes through and through whenever an opportunity presents itself. Naturally, wedded as he is to courage, fortitude and the old cultural values Meghani is more in love with the past than with the present and he regards the modern generation as effeminate. And still surprisingly, he is not bound down by any rigid approach to life which ultimately affects his art. Discussing the artist and his approach to art in "Dhūpa-chāyā", Meghani suggested that the artist should rid himself of any feeling of propaganda of this or that philosophy or be an activist in any walk of life. And yet how difficult it proved even for Meghani to do so.

To a writer who accepts many forms of literature for expression, it is not possible to demarcate themes and experiences exclusively for one particular form. This is more difficult for a journalist who has to satisfy the day-to-day hunger of his reader for a story or a novel or a folk-tale. In all the 88 works of literature which Meghani produced it is difficult to find always the variety of themes which may be possible for a writer who writes in one or two forms of literature only. However, just because the expression or the theme or the subject matter is the same, it does not follow that the approach, the attitude, and the realisation of literary experience through these is of the same order. Any look at "**Citānā Angārā**" or "**Vahu Ane Ghoḍo**," to name only two, will convince the reader of the validity of the opinion that though the matter is the same, the delineation of the characters or the organisation of the story in Meghani's works does produce a variety of experience.

It may be pointed out that "**Vahu Ane Ghoḍo**" is a story of how a bashful and innocent girl becomes a victim of pride of wealth and loses herself completely through the uncivilised behaviour of her in-laws. Any modern man can recreate through his imagination the whole scene in which old values are pitched against the modern.

Style, character-delineation and the creation of a proper atmosphere — these are the forte of Meghani as a short story

SHORT STORIES

writer. His gallery of portraits is full of variety and is unforgettable. With a sensitive mind and a fervent heart, Meghani could depict a whole range of persons in their variegated settings, in a manner that would hold the attention of any reader. Still, the characters belonging to the lower sections of the society have a far more powerful appeal than those who belong to the higher. A critic has also said that the old women in Meghani's short stories are his greatest gifts to Gujarati literature.

Language is one of the strong points in his stories. The "Sorathi" dialect with all its strength and virility and music makes Meghani a stylist of great force, though not necessarily one of great stylists of the Gujarati literature of the day. One wonders whether the inability to use the language in a more subtle and sophisticated manner is not more largely responsible than the inability to depict the conflict of the hearts in depth and on a wider scale for making him less of a stylist. And yet, it will be true to maintain that Meghani's handling of the language brings a freshness to the Gujarati short story which is almost spell-binding.

Attention must also be invited to Meghani's effort of putting into his fiction facts and situations which from real life. This effort is praiseworthy to the extent to which it succeeds in shaping the occurrences in artistic form. "*Mānasāi-nā Dīvā*" and "*Jela Ophisa-nī Bāriethī*" are two instances of this effort; while "*Palakārā*" is based on a version of a foreign film. Further, "*Mānasāi-nā Dīvā*" is a testimony to the real humanitarian and all-embracing work that Shri Ravishanker Maharaj did for the outlaws. This collection of short stories is a vindication of Meghani's ability to create a vivid sense of life, portraying the people belonging to those very sections of the society who find a place in his other short stories but who belong not to Sorath but to Kaira district. "*Mānasāi-nā Dīvā*" is thus an unforgettable picture of the outlaws of the Kaira District whose very lives changed their course through the noble efforts of Shri Ravishanker Maharaj. "*Jela Ophisa-nī Bāriethī*" depicts successfully the mind and thoughts of the jailed with the same fidelity with which he would have depicted it if he were himself in a jail. It might almost appear that one of the missions of Meghani's life was to bring out the

good in the evil, be it in discarded persons or social rituals, The short stories referred to earlier will prove the truth of this statement.

So far as form is concerned, Meghani does not rise to very great heights. He cannot handle with any dexterity this short but compact form of art. Though he himself maintained that he could write a thousand stories in a thousand ways, he rarely succeeded in fulfilling this ideal of his. He remains at best a follower of Dhumketu and yet "the thousand ways" did not refer to any form of the short story but to his attitudes towards subject-matter in the development of the short story. The fact that only 17 of his short stories have been republished in "Kasumbi-no Ranga, Pt. II", published in 1972, is in itself proof enough that time has shown him not as a delicate and a subtle artist but as one who has the vision, the power and the strength of a man of feeling, a man of courage and a man in love with the past.

CRITICISM

Just as journalism was the mainspring of Meghani's writing of novels and short stories, so also was it the manispring for the deployment of his critical faculty. For years he contributed to "Janmabhoomi" critical reviews of books and articles dealing with literary topics and criticism in general. The column was titled "Kalama Ane Kitāba". These articles were collected in "Paribhramana" part 1, 2 and 3. Add to this the letters that he wrote to friends on literary topics under his signature "Likhitānga Snehādhīna Zaverachanda" and the prefaces that he wrote for various publications. All these also have been collected and published. These writings reveal his approach to literature and critical problems connected with it. However, his most important contribution is a discussion of literary values of folk-literature. Though it may not be possible to regard his views as very scientific or philosophical, yet it will be true to say that his contribution to criticism of folk-literature is important and valid. His study, in fact, of folk-literature led to formulation of critical views which are as revelatory as independent.

However, it can be pointed out that one of the limitations of Meghani as a writer has been his journalistic necessities. Day in and day out, he had virtually to churn out literary pieces and literary criticism for the ordinary, average reader. Naturally, such writings often do not have any depth or very balanced critical awareness. But so far as criticism of folk-literature is concerned, he remains an outstanding figure. One could wish that some of the superficial writings could have been left out from his collected writings. A critic has even gone to the length of saying that "Paribhramana" doesn't read like a collection of critical writings at all. There is no propriety in some of these writings such as the piece on "Narmadā Brīja" or the strange story of the Cock, etc. Meghani's greatest contribution is the art of persuasion which he employed to make the ordinary reader literature-oriented and

help him appreciate it as best as he could.

Meghani himself has admitted that he was little-read in literature and critical writings. Answering a question on what since he did not have the greatness necessary for giving an opinion on poetry, he wrote in his column that he would not venture to give an opinion on it and felt that he did not have even a right to do it. This truthful approach of Meghani is characteristic of his whole approach to life and literature. He has the humility of a true seeker, and he is a seeker both in literature and in life. But he is a seeker who is deeply engrossed in his subject and in his reading of literature. He would read and re-read literary works because he enjoyed reading them over and over again, for, like a true appreciator of literature, one or two readings would never satisfy him. Having noted all this, it is also necessary to record that Meghani had a sensibility which was of a very high order and his thoughts and his feelings were clearly felt and clearly stated. A cultivated sense of taste, a sharpened sensibility, a clear and straight-forward thinking and expression and an ability to have well-defined concepts about literary activity, a frank and an unbiased mind — these are Meghani's sine-qua-non for literary criticism. And who can say that these are not the virtues which every critic must have?

To many critics it seems difficult to believe that a journalist, however great, could ever achieve high literary critical standards. And it is this belief which has often been responsible for regarding Meghani as a not very note-worthy literary critic. It is quite possible for a journalist to be wedded to high literary principles, and one has to sift the evidence to decide that Meghani could in certain circumstances rise to greater heights as a critic.

Thus, while journalism has its disadvantages, it has also certain advantages in the case of Meghani, so far as literary criticism is concerned, for fearlessness, clarity of thought, and a refreshingly readable style — these three virtues of a journalist have helped Meghani as a critic also. No wonder that his bold criticism of B. K. Thakore's "Mhārān Soneta" gave fearless expression to what many had thought of these sonnets but were afraid to give voice to.

CRITICISM

The main function of criticism, according to Meghani, was to make people take more interest in literature and literary activities. His profiles of literary figures like K. H. Dhruv and others were aimed at giving the ordinary reader some idea about the life that these literary figures lived and what they wrote. He also made available information about foreign literatures. Even the youth of this country owe a debt to Meghani for the inspiration he gave them through his columns to read literature.

One would like to touch in passing only the controversy about the prize that Meghani was awarded on "*Māṇasāī-nā Dīvā*". Meghani feels that he won the prize more on the literary merits of the work than on anything else.

Another aspect of Meghani's criticism is his warning against accepting blindly everything modern as valuable. He had righteous indignation against a style loaded with Sanskritism and the hollowness of situations used in modern literary works. Obscurity was an anathema to Meghani. He rejected outright that literature was for the few and not for the many. He brushed aside any claim of the intellectuals to be the purveyors of literature. He regarded as hollow the very claim of the intellectuals and cultural elite to be the arbiters of literary works. But who can say that the obscurity in literature against which he battled still does not dog our literary footsteps in the modern world?

Meghani really believed that when a compositor composing his lines for the press nodded assent to what he was composing, the acceptance of his work by the public was apparent. He further said that the non-acceptance by the publishers of a work or the non-enjoyment by the public is in itself proof that the work of art is not appealing to the common man. He experienced no difficulty in getting his work accepted for printing. While accepting that the approval by the public is not necessarily an indicator of a great work of art, it cannot also be denied that the people have a knack of distinguishing between a work of art and a work of no value. Behind this lies Meghani's firm belief in the democratic and genuine understanding of the people about works of art. Little did he accept any banning of pornographic literature — such was his faith in the people's verdict of the good and the rejection of the evil.

Notwithstanding all this, Meghani did not approve of a writer just because he happened to deal with contemporary subject matter. Since the beginning of the Second World War, the political and social forces affected the life of the people so much that they almost became the major concern of writers who often paid little attention to the aesthetics of writing. Not in the narrow sense of art for art's sake did Meghani write his novels, but art reigned supreme in his evaluation of works of literature and he expected every one's work to be evaluated from the standpoint of art. Thus, talking about novels written in Bengali after the famous Bengal famine he said: "While these novels appeal to the public because of the contemporaneous subject-matter, they would not appeal on the artistic plane at all."

Meghani had a catholic temper, and even though he was attached to the past, he did not hesitate to accept new stars on Gujarati literary firmament such as, say Dr. Umashanker, Pannalal Patel and Chunilal Madia. Whatever he felt, he felt sincerely and often tears would flow down from his eyes when anything in literature moved his mind or heart. He would rather praise a work of art than balance it on its merits and demerits. He said, "He didn't have that ability of delicately balancing a work of art". Who would not believe that this was merely an emotional outburst? He could, if only he would, evaluate a work of art critically and on sound artistic lines.

Still, one would not feel satisfied with what he has to say on art and literature in general, though one may accept his opinion on a given work of art. Meghani was not a great scholar nor a profound thinker, but his ability to enthuse his readers over what he considered a work of art was unparalleled and deserves all praise. He had an innate understanding of what is good literature and had a cultivated sense of beauty which pervades all that he saw, felt and understood in literature. His devotion to art was sincere and as clear as his understanding of life, and he spoke in no uncertain terms of what is good in literature. Of how many of our critics could we say this?

JOURNALISM

As pointed out earlier, journalism is the main forte of Meghani's writings. As editor, he discharged his duties faithfully by cultivating public opinion on current events by commenting on them freely and frankly and truthfully. Ever prepared for the consequences of his writings he embraced the cause of freedom and instilled the desire to fight for it in his readers. It was this spirit which was responsible for his setting up his headquarters at Ranpur and light the torch of freedom in the minds of the people of what was then known as native states or princely states. He did this at the risk of his life also. At the same time, he took care that as far as possible, in his mission for freedom, he should avoid harm to anyone or avoid alienating either the princes or the British "Janmabhoomi's" "Phul-chab" & "Saurashtra" were the pioneer newspapers which fulfilled the ideal of fearless journalism during the Independence movement. These performed the function of raising the people from the sleep of slavery to an alien rule and to fight for freedom. Meghani's editorial notes and comments on day-to-day situations were a powerful instrument in moulding public opinion for freedom. He often included poems such as the one written on Gandhiji's attending the Round-Table Conference, as means also to be used in the cause of freedom. In fact, it was difficult to distinguish between Meghani as a writer and Meghani as a journalist. Journalism was not a profession for him but a vocation. It almost looks as if an inner voice compelled him to accept journalism as his field of activity, because only through it he believed he could serve the people and assuage their pain and suffering — even if it meant subordinating his own suffering and conflict in personal life. To write and to go on writing—this was the one feeling, one thought, one action that inspired Meghani.

To say this is not to deny Meghani's ability to discriminate, distinguish and demarcate the boundaries of literature and

journalism. He was a journalist by choice and by conviction, but so was the artist in Meghani. Whenever he felt that he could not pursue pure journalism he did not hesitate to give it up, just as he did not hesitate to give up a lucrative job to devote himself to journalism. Like a true journalist he hated sham, hypocrisy and corruption. Not only this, he vehemently opposed any emotional outburst or prejudices or partialities of any one connected with journalism; and that is why when he found, while editing "Saurashtra", that it was impossible to overcome these, he gave up the editorship to pursue literature. This independence of spirit as a journalist is very difficult to keep up even in modern times. Rapid changes in political climate make independence of an editor not easy to sustain, and one is painfully aware in modern times of how efficiently the managements of newspapers choke the independent voices of their editors. It is in this context that one can realise how glorious, even in the days of the foreign rule, was Meghani's ability to stand up against the management, against the rulers, as a fearless journalist. He never attempted to find a scapegoat for his weak or sapless writings. He took the blame always upon himself.

As a literary columnist, he collected his materials from the literature of Bengal and from that of other countries, just as he spent a lot of his time listening to heroic and folk-tales sung to him by the Chārāns. All these he used in the literary column to excite the imagination of the common man, who felt inspired and who waited for his writing like the *Chataka* bird for rains. To make a whole society aware and interested in the literature he created is no mean achievement for any journalist anywhere.

One of the benefits which Meghani derived from his journalism was the cultivation of a straightforward style. At the heart of Meghani, the journalist, was the literary artist. He was no ordinary reporter or purveyor of news. Self-sacrifice, hard work, resourcefulness, imagination and an easy-to-understand style, matched by a fearless temper coupled with a value system as sound as his expression of it — these are the virtues which inspired Meghani's work as a journalist.

As pointed out earlier, Meghani used poetry and verse for

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creating an awareness about the contemporary political life in this country. Whether it was the Simon Commission or the Jalianwala Baug or Bardoli and Dholera Satyagrahas or the Dandi March — in writing about all these Meghani gave expression to the voice of the people, their suffering, their aspirations, their disappointments. In "Saurashtra", late Shri Amritlal Sheth wrote 'the political leaders', but the task of creating public opinion and moulding that public opinion was left to the unflinching pen of Meghani. In sum, Meghani could not remain aloof from the politics of the day, but he could always rise above it to allow his literary soul to have a free play on the political events of the day.

While it may be conceded that journalism did affect Meghani's writings, it can also be asserted that he gave a literary colour and emphasis and value to whatever short stories or novels of character-sketches found their way in "Saurashtra", "Phulchab" or "Urmī". Two examples of these are "Manasai-na Diva" and "Jela Ophisa-ni Bariethi."

In fine, Meghani was an ideal journalist who regarded the journalist as a truth-seeking, self-abnegating, hard-work loving, value-imbibing and value-advancing teacher of the people. His greatest contribution as a journalist was to be found not only in the pace it gave to his literary work but also in his successful moulding of public opinion. To be able to enlighten the public and to make the people feel and argue and act on the problems that affect their lives — what more could a journalist wish for? And what more could he achieve in the ever-vanishing world of journalism? That Meghani succeeded in all these is a mark of his genius as a journalist.

FOLK-LITERATURE: (EDITING AND RESEARCH)

While the credit for collecting and editing of folk-literature should go to Meghani, it was a Parsi gentleman who initiated interest in the folk-stories of Gujarat and Saurashtra. He was followed by Ranjitrām Vavabhai Mehta and others, who also interested themselves in collecting folk-literature. Meghani has noted this in the preface to "Saurāstrānī Rasadhāra". It was left to the missionary zeal of Meghani to revive understanding and appreciation of a whole range of folk literature which lay buried because of the prejudices of the higher class of society. He unearthed a large number of stories, poems, songs and recorded these by meeting the living authors or compilers or songsters. One can even say that folk-literature became Meghani's religion, and he was devoted to it in the spirit of a seeker.

It was an agonising cry, meant for the University and the researchers, which Meghani uttered when he said that though he had tried his best to delve deep into the customs, conventions, social and political modes of various communities like Bheels, sailors and a host of other scheduled tribes of Saurashtra, (his ambition was to collect the literature of these people from various parts of Gujarat), he felt deep sorrow at the fact that he was not able to do the work fully, and, therefore, he appealed almost with a sense of anguish to the Universities to carry on and keep burning the torch of folk-literature everywhere in Gujarat. It must be frankly admitted that precious little has been done to carry on the work that Meghani had started. Unaided, single-handed and circumstance-bewildered, he spared no pains to collect folk literature. Today, with all the help available like tape-recorders, help from the University Grants Commission, University research scholarships and what not, it is a sad comment to note that the work on folk-literature almost remains standstill. No wonder, the spirit that lay behind Meghani's work remains

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unfulfilled.

Thanks to Meghani, whatever has been preserved is so valuable that it can throw light on and be the basis of an understanding of the people's mind and heart. For the oral precedes the written, and to collect oral evidence to understand the primitive and the pre-civilised mind is in itself foundation of literary or social development of any country. This study owes its existence to the work of Western scholars interested in Eastern literature. A study of folk-literature of various countries would reveal common sentiments, common miseries, common solutions. It is quite possible to trace a parallel in some of the folk-tales of Gujarat with some of the folk-tales of say Germany or Eastern Europe. This may be the result of the migrations of people from one continent to another or may be the result of exchanges of thought and trade practices.

The comparative study of literatures, which began in the 19th century laid the foundation of comparative linguistics and through them of the investigations into the mind and habits of the people who spoke different languages. The publication of the folk-literatures of different countries gave rise also to analysis of the themes, the motivations and the psychology of the people whose literatures were being published. An encyclopaedic work containing information about these on a world-wide scale was prepared by Stith Thompson.

While not minimising the value of all that Meghani did for folk-literature, it is also true that his work is only a first step in the right direction. Till scholars study whatever Meghani has collected on a scientific basis there is not much point in collecting the materials only. It may be difficult for the modern man to live among the lower sections of the society in order to collect their songs, poems, etc. as it may also be difficult for him to approach the uneducated to get them to reveal their fellow-feeling, aspirations and misgivings, love and which are found in some of the editing Meghani has done of folk-poems. To illustrate, the poem below is rich in colour, in emotional symbols and in imagination which reveals itself at every stage of the development of the theme of the poem. One of the beauties of the poems is the surge of emotion that is generated directly and indirectly through

the use of the symbols conveying the murder of the newly-wed by the mother-in-law. Words embody agony and poignancy beyond measure. The husband's search for the wife after a separation of more than 12 years is indicated through the imagery which is localised and yet effective. The metre adds its own strength to the beauties of the poem, just as the choice of words also does. One can go on analysing in this manner, but sufficient it is to point out that the poem is one example of how effective his collection of folk-poems is for the purpose of revealing the mind and the heart of the common man in uncommon circumstances.

FOLK - LITERATURE

NO DĪTHĪ*

Māḍi ! bāra bāra varase āvio,
 Māḍi ! no dīthī pātaḷi paramārya re, Jādeji Mā !
 Molumān divo śaga baḷe re.
 Dikarā ! heṭho besī-ne hathiyāra ṇoḍya re, kalaiyā
 kuṇvara !

Pāṇi bharī-ne hamaṇān āvaśe re.
 Māḍi ! kuvā ne vāvyuṇ joi valyo re,
 Māḍi ! no dīthī pātaḷi paramārya re, Jādeji Mā !
 Molumān divo śaga baḷe re.
 Dikarā ! heṭho besī-ne hathiyāra ṇoḍya re, kalaiyā
 kuṇvara !

Dalaṇān daḷine hamaṇān āvaśe re.
 Māḍi ! ghaṇṭiun ne rathaḍān joi valyo re,
 Māḍi ! no dīthī pātaḷi paramārya re, Jādeji Mā !
 Molumān divo śaga baḷe re.
 Dikarā ! heṭho besī-ne hathiyāra ṇoḍya re, kalaiyā
 kuṇvara !

Dhāna khāṇḍīne hamaṇān āvaśe re.
 Māḍi ! khāraṇiyā khāraṇiyā joi valyo re,
 Māḍi ! no dīthī pātaḷi paramārya re, Jādeji Mā !
 Molumān divo śaga baḷe re.
 Dikarā ! heṭho besī-ne hathiyāra ṇoḍya re, kalaiyā
 kuṇvara !

Dhoṇyuṇ dhoi-ne hamaṇān āvaśe re.
 Māḍi ! nadīun ne nerān joi valyo re,
 Māḍi ! no dīthī pātaḷi paramārya re, Jādeji Mā !
 Molumān divo śaga baḷe re.
 Enā baṇakāmān korī bāndhaṇi re.
 Enī bāndhaṇi dekhīne bāvo thāun re, Gojhāraṇ Mā !
 Molumān āmbo moḍio re.
 Enā baṇakāmān korī ṭilaḍi re,
 Enī ṭilaḍi tāṇīne tarsūla tāṇumre, Gojhāraṇ Mā !
 Molumān āmbo moḍio re.

* From "Raḍhiyāli Rāta", Pt. 1, pp. 30-31, (6th Edn.).

FRUITLESS SEARCH

O mother! I returned after twelve years,

After twelve years only

O mother! I didn't find the slim-waisted lady.

O mother, of the "Jadeja" family,

The wick-light burns bright in the palace (Refrain)

Rest your weapons, O dear son,

The slim-waisted lady would soon return after fetching
water

O mother! I searched the wells and the step-wells

But didn't find the slim-waisted lady.

O mother of the "Jadeja" family,

The wick-light burns bright in the palace (Refrain)

O Son, O dear son, rest your weapons

The slim-waisted lady would return after milling the corn

O mother! I've searched for her in all the places

But I didn't find the slim-waisted lady.

O mother! of the "Jadeja" family,

The wick-light burns bright in the place (Refrain)

Rest O son, your arms!

The slim-waisted lady would return after crushing the
grains.

O mother! I've looked for grain mortars everywhere,

But I didn't find the slim-waisted lady.

O mother! of the "Jadeja" family

The wick-light burns bright in the palace (Refrain)

O Son, rest your weapons!

The slim-waisted lady would return after the washing is
done.

O mother! I have roamed the river-banks and the rivulets,

But didn't find the slim-waisted lady.

O mother! of the "Jadeja" family,

O mother! of the "Jadeja" family,

FOLK-LITERATURE

The wick-light burns bright in the palace (Refrain)
O mother! her "*Bandhani*" is still *untouched* in her sack,
I should turn a homeless wanderer. O murderous mother,
The *mango-tree* has been killed in the palace!
In her sack is the marriage-tikka,
I should turn a homeless wanderer. trident in hand
The mango-tree has been murdered in the palace.

(The words in italics are some of the symbols of purity, virginity and faith. Indirectly the poem conveys through these symbols that the woman is murdered, and yet the lamp in the palace burns bright, without a spot, showing the contrast between that which is visible and what has been done in the darkness).

FOLK-LITERATURE

Meghani's folk-literature could be divided under three heads: (1) Tales and songs, (2) Creative literature, (3) Criticism. Tales and songs have been presented practically in the form in which he had heard them. This is as it should be, for the presentation of the material in the form in which it was received is more conducive to the study of a folk-mind. The removal or the addition of any part by the compiler may be acceptable aesthetically, but it is basically harmful in the study of the thought and feeling expressed in folk-literature. These compositions are a veritable key to unlocking the secrets of the folk-mind. It is, therefore, to the credit of Meghani that he has allowed these songs and tales to appear as they were, neither rejecting nor editing anything, which to the modern mind may appear more aesthetic. He is in a true sense the genuine recorder of the literature of the people. Among his publications of folk-compositions are, "Raḍhīālī Rāta; pt. I-IV, "Chūndaḍī", pts. I-II, "Rtu-gīto", "Sorathī Saṅta-Vāṇī", "Hālaraḍān", "Sorathī Gita-kathāo" and "Sorathane Tīre Tīre". Some 770 pieces have been collected in them, thus saving them from sinking into the limbo of oblivion and making it easy for them to be appreciated by the interested. Meghani's collection of folk songs is a treasure-house of the richest pleasure. Here one can encounter songs of marriages, of incompatible temperaments, of *Rasas* of various types which are an expression of various aspects of the life of the people. Unfortunately, scholars in Gujarat have not cared to explore further the possibility of research in them thus, failing to exploit the golden mine that Meghani has left us by sheer dint of hard work. It is difficult to classify these songs into various categories on the basis of Meghani's own evidence, but time has come for the universities in Gujarat to pursue the study of these songs, collect the best of them and comment on them in a scientific manner and publish all of them in one volume.

FOLK - LITERATURE

Unlike the editing of folk-songs and poems, the editing of the folk-tales has not been helped by a scientific method. This is partly due to Meghani's desire to enthuse people over folk-tales and to make them cultivate a liking for them. Excepting in "Kankavati" (Parts I and II) and "Dadajini Vato", much of this literature has been touched up in one way or another. To say this is not to ascribe any fault to the editing but to point out the lack of scientific editing in these tales. That is why these collections have resulted in establishing Meghani as only a collector and editor of folk-literature. "Saurastarani Rasadhara" (Pts I-V), "Sorathi Baharavatiya," "Sorathi Santo", "Ranga Che Barota" and "Puratana Jola"—these are well-known folk-literature collections, which hold reader's interest for any length of time, so much so that the reader would like to finish any one of these works at one sitting. This is in itself a testimony to Meghani's art as a supreme story-teller. The very language of the Charans and the Bhats has a verve, a perspicacity, a force, music and sweetness of its own, which carries one away the moment one comes into contact with it.

The tales of heroic love were collected not only to preserve them from being lost but also to preserve the heroic element in the life of the people. This was also meant to encourage love for the past and to make the youths of the region hold their heads high and dedicate themselves to the cause they espoused. These tales proved to be an ideal instrument in making the soft-spoken, balance-weighting, resignation-loving, heroism-bereft Gujaratis have a sense of courage and valour.

Meghani was a genuine disseminator of the information about the outlaws. To him, work on the outlaws was an aim in life, though it may not be pure history that he has given through the lives and tales of these outlaws. What he provides is an imaginative reconstruction of incidents, situations and battles of these outlaws, often supported by the very words used by them in a given context. Meghani, however, took care that not a character was invented, not a situation manufactured, not an artificial value added to these tales. True, it is difficult to sift sometimes the real from the imagined, but on the whole as much fidelity as was possible

for an overwhelmed editor was maintained while compiling these tales. What a tribute it is to Meghani that inspite of all the sufferings caused to him by the outlaws, he almost worshipped the heroic in them and they acted as a magnet to his personality as did the hills and dales, the rivers and the creeks of Saurashtra.

Next comes the criticism of folk-literature—The critical volumes include — “Loka-sāhitya”, “Loka-Sāhitya-Pagadandī-no paṇṭha”, “Cārāṇo Ane Cārāṇī Sāhitya”, “Dharatīnūṇ Dhāvāṇa and “Loka-Sāhitya-nūṇ Samālocaṇa”. Meghani has noted the essential details for the research in folk literature in “Saurāstranāṇ Khānderomāṇ” and “Parakammā”. These volumes represent the wealth of folk-literature that Meghani collected single-handed. The criticism of folk-literature and the methodology to be adopted for it are given in “Loka Sāhityanūṇ Samālocana”, which gives the ‘summum-bonum’ of all that he thought on them. One can even see his approach to folk-literature in some of the prefaces to his volumes of poetry.

To Meghani goes the credit of having begun a systematic study of folk-literature. The work done before him was extremely limited and meagre. He not only examined this literature in depth, but also succeeded in making its meaning clearer to the ordinary reader, just as he succeeded in making it not only an object of curiosity but an object of love to the common man. In fact, all his writings reveal the treasure hidden in folk literature. The village folk went to Meghani naturally, because to them he was a friend and a guide, a solace in the wilderness of civilisation. A brick-layer at the Ranpur Press, a shepherd grazing his cows on the village green, the old mother of his compositor, or the Darbar of Vajsurwala of Hadala and a host of others were the living sources for Meghani’s collection.

The journey of the folk-poet is long and arduous. He traverses many paths and suffers from many tribulations. The traveller in Meghani was never satiated, and the Romantic in him looked before and after and sang the songs of sorrow and joy of life. He lived in the world of the day with the people who offered everything they had on the alter of life. Much has been done by Meghani to enshrine the values of these old and heroic people.

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but much also remains to be done. May we hope that somewhere sometime in Gujarat, there will rise another soul who will carry on the torch of this folk-literature to every corner of the country, and make available to Gujarat the folk-tales of other parts of the country, so that once more we can genuinely establish the unity of the people of this country amidst all the diversities of their cultures. On that day, as we do today, we shall pay again our glorious tribute to Meghani, the bard of the people, who became a nation's symbol for the fight for Independence. Freedom lies not only in the political emancipation of the people, but in the emancipation of the soul of the people; and where does one discover in this wide world the soul of the people than in their folk-literature?

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THE BOND (Dastavej)

Over the head of the Rajput, the heavens ominously thundered and it almost looked that they would fall on him. He had received a message from his in-laws that if on the second of the month Jyeshtha he did not reach their place with a thousand rupees to celebrate his marriage, or if he delayed, the girl would be married to someone else.

When the Rajput read this message, he heaved a deep sigh.

He mused, would the betrothal be cancelled? Would all the wait be unrewarded? Would all the play right from childhood to adolescence be without any significance? Would Raajaba ultimately wed someone else. Sweat-drops gathered on the newly-sprung moustache of this early-orphaned Rajput.

The entire paternal estate of his father was in shambles. All he had inherited was a small hut and an engagement arranged early in his childhood by his parents. He had hoped that the moment of happiness had arrived. He had hoped that in his otherwise dead house, Raajaba, with all her sprightliness, would walk in after marriage and enliven the house by her presence, by cleansing old utensils and making them shine brightly and by bringing a sizeable dowry. Nay, his hope was there also in his receiving moiety from his uncle as part of marriage-gifts. But when he read the letter, all his dream-world was shattered—the love from a newly-wed wife, her house-hold skills and the “patara” (a specially constructed wooden safe) filled with dowry and his marriage moiety. The Rajput blood began to race faster in his veins. His temples throbbed with pain and he thought: “Death is preferable to my betrothed going to someone else. Kill or be killed — should be my only aim.” But how should he kill and whom should he kill — he didn’t have even the money to sharpen the blade of his sword.

The Rajput touched the feet of the village money-lender

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with whom his estate was in mortgage and said plaintively: "O uncle, help me to save my prestige! Otherwise I'll have an unhappy death. For, before I lose my betrothed, I shall have to commit suicide by taking poison. Give me a thousand rupees only. I shall repay the same, even if it means selling myself in the market. I promise that if I am not able to pay this sum in this life, I shall serve you by being your son in the next birth."

But the Baniya did not soften. The Rajput beseeched the Baniya again, almost imagining that his Raajaba was being dragged away from him that very moment in his own presence.

The Baniya took out a piece of paper, wrote something on it and asked the Rajput to sign the document, adding that he did not know what would happen.

The blood in the Rajput's vein froze when he read the document, which enjoined upon him not to cohabit with his married one till he had discharged the debt of the thousand rupees.

The Rajput signed the document, took a thousand rupees and left with a copy of this agreement.

Meanwhile, Raajaba, restless in her father's house, day-dreamed of her poor but lovable husband-to-be, as if drawing imaginatively his picture in her heart almost like a sculptor carving an image on marble. She yearned in her heart for her own home.

The sun of the second of the Jyeshtha rose in the sky, and the Rajput walked into the assembly at his father-in-law's house and put the bag containing a thousand rupees on the floor. Addressing his father-in-law, he said, "Here are a thousand rupees."

A sensation ran through the assembly. The people felt that the father-in-law had almost created a death-dealing situation for the Rajput. One by one, each one left the assembly, condemning the father-in-law for this. The in-laws' faces lost their lustre. And a trembling and a tearful bride in agony whispered in the corner of a room that the Rajput would wreck, vengeance on her for these thousand rupees.

II

The Rajput, having seated his wife in a palanquin, bade farewell to his father-in-law's village and saluted the last trees and the outskirts. Raajaba's heartbeats thumped against her chest as

she entered her house, that wore a barren and deserted look. Unsullied so far by any household work, this fully-blossomed bride took a broom and swept the floor of her old house many a time and it got a new look. Dusting the small 'chaklas' as often as possible, she made the rooms have a sparkle of their own. Their very cleanliness was reflected in the mirrors that shone in the wall-carpet.

At night Raajaba served dinner to her husband, fanning him with a hand-fan decorated with pearls. The Rajput ate his dinner silently gazing all the while on the mud-floor of the room. In the dim light of a wick lamp, she waited for her husband on a soft spread bed made from Akola cotton. The husband came, drew a sword and laid it between himself and the lady. He turned aside and the wife turned the other way.

The open sword divided and distanced the two as if for miles.

Three nights went by, keeping each other away. During the day, the eyes spoke love to eyes, and yet at night the sword came in the way of fulfilment. The wife found the mystery insoluble. She realised that there was not a trace of revenge in the looks of the husband. He came to the bed at the appointed time too. What was he testing? Or, did he lack manliness? Or, was he engaged in a tantrik ritual? She could not decide anything herself. She found the bliss of love to be like a Tantalus' cup.

One, two, three — three nights passed thus. On the fourth night again the husband came and went to bed in the usual manner. The wife stood against the wall till midnight without batting an eye-lid, almost like an image of wax. Some time passed. The puzzled husband queried why she was standing thus.

Tears flowed over the cheeks of the love-seeking bride.

The husband queried again, "Is it the remembrance of your father's house that pains you thus?"

The woman replied, "Enough, O lord! Is the revenge on my father's house still not over?"

The husband asked what she intended to convey.

She said, "You are a Rajput and I am a Rajputani, who has been given suck by a Rajput mother. Keep the sword like a great divide between us if you choose to. I shall not utter a syllable about it."

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The Rajput asked, "Why do you stand thus?"

The wife replied: "I am just wanting to unravel the mystery. If I am in your way, please let me know. I shall get out immediately."

The husband asked, "What mystery?"

The wife replied, "The mystery of the sword lying between us."

The husband gave her the agreement with the Baniya and asked her to read it.

The wife read the agreement and her eyes suddenly shone with new brightness, like the lamp that shines sparkingly when fresh oil is added to it. She exclaimed, "Brave is a son like you, born of a noble mother! May your mother be blessed! Let it be so, there is no harm done by the agreement".

III

At mid-day the husband returned to the house for the mid-day meal. The wife sat by his side, fanning him with a newly-made fan decorated with pearls, and asked, "How long will you continue like this without doing anything for the bond?"

"Do you want that I run about for it?", the husband inquired almost with contempt.

"Take these," said the bride, and she took off all the ornaments from her body excepting two ivory bangles and put the heap on the floor.

Looking at the heap, the Rajput exclaimed: "What shall I do with these? Shall I pay off the debt with them? Have you reached the end of your patience? Would you expect me, O Rajputani! to discharge my debt by selling your ornaments?"

"Do not be hasty, my husband", said the woman. "Buy two horses and two pairs of Rajput dresses and two weapons."

"For whom is the second dress, weapon and horse meant?"

The wife said they were meant for her.

"For you?" asked the wondering husband.

"Certainly for me," asserted the woman. "So long I have played the Rajput in children's games. Often I have donned the Rajput dress, sharpened the sword and used the weapons. On the blackest of nights, dressed as a man, I have guarded my house. But all this was a game. Now I shall truly dress like a man and

work with you like a younger brother".

The Rajput smiled a puzzled smile and looked on.

IV

Dressed as men the husband and the wife wended their way in search of work in any great kingdom. Even the Gods would wonder whether the woman who donned the man's dress was really one or the other. There was a change in the complexion of the woman. She looked in appearance a complete man with manliness lined red in her eyes.

Just when these two, on dancing and galloping horses, entered a kingdom, the King himself was riding out in a procession.

The two caught the King's eye at once. The King marvelled at the skill of Gods in creating these two. The King fell in for them and asked them who they were.

"We are Rajputs," they asserted.

"Why are you here?"

"In search of work to earn our bread".

"Would you like to live in my Kingdom?", asked the King.

The two bowed assent.

"Are you relatives?"

"Yes Sir, we are cousins."

Then they were put on the pay-roll of the King.

V

Whose spear was thrust into the mouth of the lion when on that hunting expedition there was only the distance of an inch between the attacking though injured lion and the King's elephant, and when fifty swords of guardsmen all around remained shy?

That was Raajaba's spear which pierced through the lion at one stroke.

On the heels of this feat came the promotion for the two Rajputs and they were asked to guard the King's bedroom. A year went by, and the two Rajputs continued to serve the King, but a thousand rupees seemed very very far away and there was no sign of discharging the Baniya's debt.

The nights of Ashadh were melting away, and floating clouds accidentally embraced one another in the sky and slept on mountain tops. Love-tears transformed into rain drops dripped

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slowly on the earth.

No one saw these mid-night embraces in an overcast sky, save the flickering moonlight that was also occasionally glancing mischievously through the chink of the palace doors. The chirping of the crickets was a melody that induced sleep in the clouds. The lightening shone with white heat of the passion of love. The small peals of thunder resonated throughout the sky, as if they were the audible signs of the agony of the love-torn.

Imagine the condition at such a time of the two Rajputs guarding the King's bed-room! Standing with the support of the pillar at his back, spear in hand, the Rajput dozed off for a while. The Rajputani, however, was awake and her eyes got stuck on the clouds, and she remembered that one Ashadh had come and gone and the another had come again. Twelve months had lapsed, and no one on that night was lonely. She was the only unfortunate one, and the husband leaning against the wall just opposite appeared to be almost a hundred miles away.

She heard the rumbling of the clouds. The brave woman, never frightened by even the roar of the lion, was to-night somehow afraid and ran to the leaning husband. Hardly an inch separated the two and suddenly with a jerk she remembered the agreement. The Baniya, as it were, pulled her back from a distance—the distance that lay between the palace and the Rajput's village. At that moment, what did she see in her sleeping husband's face? Suddenly she saw the sad beauty of his face, the agony of love writ large on it.

The Rajputani turned back. Gazing at his beautiful face, she retraced her steps which appeared to be rooted to the floor in answer as if to the mischief of the clouds above.

All the manliness of this woman let itself out through the armour, through her heart, in a deep sigh. And, what a sigh! It fell on the earth with a thump, and if there had been light around, it could have been seen.

The Rajputani cupped her jasmine like face in the palm of her hand resting on the balcony of the bed-room and stood there. The Bapaiya, almost in sympathy, cried in a mysterious manner: "Piyu, piyu"; and the words reverberated in all directions. The Rajputani sang a couplet in response to the

Bapaiya's word, and the skies looked bashful at the sound of the Rajputani's word:

There is lightening in my country tonight. But my lover is in another land — O — he is just by my side, but in the dress of my brother! The day on which we collect the thousand rupees and return to our village, on that day I shall regard him as my husband. Till then we are a brother and a sister.

VI

Next day after the sunrise the Begum, all too impatient to relate to the King what she had known in the night, told him that there was something mysterious about the two Rajputs.

"Do you want me to cut them to pieces?", asked the King.

"No, no. They have to be united. Of the two Rajputs one is a woman, and there seems to be a mysterious cause for their separation".

"Don't be crazy. Don't you see that there is manly fire in the eyes of the two?", said the King.

"Find the truth out and see who is crazy."

"How did you know?", asked the King.

"At midnight I was awake. Sleep had forsaken me, and I heard a deep sigh and the walls echoed it. And one of the two sang a couplet — a couplet a woman alone can sing."

"How do we find out the truth," asked the King.

"I will show you the way", said the Queen. "Call both of them together for a cup of milk. Allow the milk to be boiled in their presence, and allow it to spill over while being heated. The one who feels disturbed and restless at the spilt milk is the woman. A woman's soul is made that way. She cannot allow milk to be spilt over, and taken in suddenly like that she would reveal herself."

The King called both the Rajputs, allowed the milk to be heated in their presence and allowed it to overflow.

The Rajputani, whose heart gave way suddenly, lost control over herself, and, restless and confused, she exclaimed: "The milk is boiling over!"

The Rajput elbowed her and angrily said, "How are you concerned with it? It's not your father's."

The mystery was solved. The King took them to the Queen's bed-chamber. With a smile, the Queen asked, "Who

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are you? Tell me the truth. I promise no harm will come to you".

The Rajputani felt bashful. She lowered her eyes and hid herself in a corner of the bed-room.

The Rajput revealed his story tearfully and talked about the agreement. "Bravo, bravo. O Rajput!", exclaimed the King. He was struck by the courage and integrity of the Rajput. "You are to me like a son and a daughter. I shall arrange immediately to pay a thousand rupees to the Baniya. Both of you would stay in one of my palaces and begin your married life there".

Just at that moment the Queen rushed back with the clothes of a Rajputani and asked the Rajputani to put them on.

Tears flowed down their cheeks and prayerfully they said: "O lord! You are our real parents, but this problem is not going to be solved the way you suggest. We shall have to go ourselves to the Baniya, pay the thousand rupees and tear the agreement to pieces and then only we can break our vow."

The King gave them gifts and titles and saw them off to their village.

Having settled the debt with the Baniya and got the lands released, the vow-bound couple afterwards celebrated their first wedding night. **

** Mr. Cincade in his stories from Sindh refers to a story almost similar to the one told here. In an old book of stories titled "Rajvir-Katha", the hero of this story is one Sodha from Umar-gaon, the money-lender Bania is from Jesalmir, and the shelter-giving King is the King of Udaipur. Some regard this as a story from Marwar and some regard it as one from Sorath. It is not possible to ascertain the validity or otherwise of these beliefs. (Saurashtrani Rasadhar; Part-4. Pages: 75 to 85. Reprint - 1962)

YOUTH'S DREAMLAND

The mind throbs with thoughts, the soul is impatient to fly;
The youth dreams of unknown places.
On the edge of this unknown land.
The gaze of the youth is fixed.
The gaze of the youths is fixed,
The soul is mounted on the horse, though the path is unknown.
The soul has its eagle-wing fluttering.
Donning ochre-robcs, the youth is keen on fighting.
Who obstructs them and who weeps?
Let the dear ones not weep,
And offer not tears, they are an ill omen.
Do not damp the enthusiasm of the warriors.
And do not search for the intoxicated youth.
When we wept beseechingly, and bowed to all.
And staggered and stumbled—those days are fading away.
The days of the weak are over,
And the youth steps forward with pride.
We have ceased to beg for others' mercy.
On the battlefield of the world the days of the youth are come.
To know the unknown, to measure the unmeasured.
To overcome the limits of truth,
The youth of the world starts its vigil.
To know the unknown lands, to overcome the limits.
To reach the depths of the sea,
To roam the corners of the world, to face death,
To-day the youth desire to live this way.

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FAREWELL

We had brothers, sisters and relatives. We had our homes.
Under the protective care of our fathers; we played in the laps of
our mothers;

And the tears of our sisters rocked us.
And our hot-teared eyes swung to rest.

Years elapsed crushing the warmth of love and affection.
But we made our soft hearts burning coals,
And when we breathed our last sighs out,
Blood streamed from every skin-pore.

Time was not to embrace our love.
Time was not to fondle our children,
Time was not to tell the mothers:
"Regard, O Mother, the tears shed as small children's."

Oh, how long you followed us on our path.
And how sweetly you spoke of the love of the land.
And how you kissed our rosy cheeks!
Of no avail was your beseeching us to return.

Comrade young! Keep away from us if you choose.
Regard us as lost on the way, if you like;
Call us foolish, if you feel some sympathy for us;
Hate us, if you will, but do not think us weak.
O comrades! forgive the brothers mad.
Have you ever known patience in the lovers' hearts?
To whom shall we show our heart-burns?
Remember sometime our recklessness.

Better forget us mortals.
And ruin not your happy life by bad remembrances.
If Independence comes take this a secret request:
Remember us also for a brief moment.

THE LAST DRINK

(Written at the time of the Round Table Conference which
Gandhiji attended.)

Drink O Bapu! this last drink of hemlock.
Do not reject this last cup, you who could drink an ocean of poison.
Abiding faith has always governed your life.
You have faced rogues, double-dealers.
You who are prepared to sleep even in the lap of the enemy.
Sleep again on this last pillow, O Bapu!
Let them kill you; You have to fathom the mind of the enemy.
Like in the battle between the good and the evil.
What do they know who only desire pearls in this new churning
for freedom?
Who will drink this hemlock like Shiva without you, O Bapu?
Go quickly, O Bapu! to swallow this poison to the fill.
Though soft but furious Bapu! Please go!
The world will question:
Has the virtue left the Yogis?
Have the oceans been dried; Have the clouds been emptied of all
their waters?
Have the lights of the Sun and the Moon exhausted themselves?
Let not our miseries stop you, O Bapu!
Having suffered, we shall suffer more, but do not stop, O Bapu!
Whipping seizures and fines,
Prisons which are living church-yards,
Random shootings here and there —
All these are now a way of life with us, O Bapu!
Our flower-like hearts have been steeled by you, O Bapu!
You may bring or may not bring any prize from there,
We still will love you all the same,
And we shall embrace you with love
But reach the ears of the world at the Conference, O Bapu!

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And let the world know our pain and sorrow.
The world will taunt; The self-knowing did not attend;
The Proud Man did not attend for he knew his weakness.
What a lover of the world was he who knew not the pains of the
people.
The sick mankind is troubled. O Bapu-
Go, to break the mad bull; It yearns for your healing touch
O Bapu!
Go, to sprinkle water on the massacre of the world.
Go, to build a bridge across the seven seas.
O Bapu! you shed a light on the dark path in the thick forest.
You nurse the ferocious lion. O Bapu!
The Lord is thy guide; Proceed. O Bapu!
Having drunk the last cup of hemlock return, O Bapu!

THE LAST PRAYER

A thousand-years' old are our agonies,
Our fear-stories terrify and tear the heart,
The blood of the dead and the tears of the living;
— These are offered to You O Lord!

This is our last offering say Amen!
Give us our lost Independence, O Lord!
Ask for more sacrifices if you need so.
But be with us, O Lord! in our last battle.
Behold, O Lord- this is our last war,

Show us if the cause is shady,
Washed by our blood and tears.
Our freedom-fighters seek Your blessings.

We do not know what obstacles lie in our path,
We know only the call of the mother-land,
This is moment to die that the mother-land.
We have no worry since Your benevolent eye is on us.

Look at our hearts laid bare O Lord!
Look at the thousand streams of blood from every wound.
Look at the secret smouldering fires of injustice,
All these are offered to You, O Lord!

Let the night be pitched dark, if you light the way.
Let the battlefield be our death-bed, you give us the last Drink.
Let the clash of the arms reverberate. are fighting
Let the gentle flute be played for the dying.

Our sky-high towers of hope are falling
And a thousand intimidating fires are crackling;
Nonetheless the stream of offering will not cease,
Till the mother land gets her freedom back.

APPENDIX

MARCH FORWARD

March forward! March forward! March forward!
March forward comrades on the path of sacrifice
March forward, for there is no path to return.
Stop not there is pressure at the back.
Weep not—but sing on intoxicated.

March forward! March forward! March forward!
You who would sit, who would allow sitting
Every moment new war-fires burn.
Abandon hope to roll in rest.

March forward! March forward! March forward!
March forward on the high seas,
Or in waterless deserts, or on mountain tops and dense forests.
Though thunder or heat obstruct your path,

March forward! March forward! March forward!
Though the goal remain unattained,
Hunger stare in the face,
Throats get parched, strength ebb.
Of what avail will it be to stop on the way?

March forward! March forward! March forward!
Comrades may come or may not;
Suffering hatred or maligning or evil;
Embracing the enmity of the enemies;

March forward! March forward! March forward!
Where would you stand? The stones burn below?
The outside is cool but the inside burns lava like.
Why spread flowers on burning coals?

March forward! March forward! March forward!
All these are the last gasps of sins;
Destruction of evil is not far off;
And soon will end the anguish of your life.

March forward! March forward! March forward! .
To live on the top of Volcano,
O Young men! You have undertaken a journey.
To swing in the freedom of the mother-land,

March forward! March forward! March forward!
March forward! March forward! March forward!
March forward comrades on the path, of sacrifice.

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