3 Landscape, Poetry and the Hero

Kingship, landscape, and poetry—particularly heroic poetry—have been involved together in Northern India for millennia, mutually dependent and mutually thriving. In this Collection of paintings MK Jayasinhji Jhala has both inspired and arranged a combination of sources and artistic agencies and the result attains an uncommon and most beautiful fruition. The exhibition presents a matchless collection as well as a new school of Indian painting, depicting significant princely life in the clan of Jhala during the last millennium; such a rich historical retrospective is unique in the custom and conventions of North Indian courtly painting. The people in these pictures are a clan that stems from Kirtigadh in Sindh where Harpaldev—who established the lineage—originated in the Eleventh Century; the clan is now settled in Saurashtra of Western Gujarat. In this essay I shall describe their ksatriya culture and the early literature which supplies a framing context for the exhibition, the manifold, as it were, from which these works on paper have sprung.

Heroes in antiquity were always figures of local significance and achievement, unlike the more Pan-Indic deities; within a particular geographical region heroes were active in their superhuman efforts and dynamic in the worship which they received. It was this specifically local devotion, engaged by rituals of honour, that went to generate supernatural consequences which were of benefit for the community: harvests, fertility of stock, security from attack, and the general well-being of the people.

Kings possessed authority but it was the puissant energy of the heroes that accomplished the words and aims of the king or chief. Similarly it was kingship that patronised the poets who proclaimed the deeds of the heroes. All three of these agencies—kings, heroes, and poets—grounded their position within and upon a particular terrain and topography, where a certain landscape supplied the foundation for rule, literature, and mythology. Within a cultural situation the interaction of these three components was inseparable and this was especially so in societies that were preliterate and premonetary in form; for there the ancient songs, stories, and pictures

1 Some of the items in the Collection are actually large paintings, oil on canvas: such as Nos. 3.6 3.7 and 7.5.
2 There is a beautiful depiction of this relation between raja and kavi in painting No.1.1, where Raj Gajsinhji I, c.1663, is shown listening to or in colloquy with his poet. These paintings have been commissioned during the last decade by Jayasinhji Jhala and illustrate the Jhala lineage, beginning with Harpalji in the Eleventh Century C.E. In McGrath (2017), I have described at length the system and pattern of late bronze age kingship as represented by Epic Mahabharata. Jhala (1991) has carefully examined the kingship and its corollary kinship systems as historically played out in Saurashtra; these accounts of his form the basis and background for the Collection.
were the actual vehicles of social value and its transmission and in this way *ksatriya* or ‘warrior’ ontology was generated, communicated, and received.³

Concerning the aetiology of the pictorial, in this poetic process of song—which preceded the visual process of painting by many centuries—the relation between word and image, between the material or acoustic and the pictorial was vital and crucial, for this was how the audible effect of poetry went to create a mental image for an audience; or, how the poet visualised for an audience the heroic and royal narratives.⁴ In an hypothetical and original sense therefore, such an occasion of poetic performance marks the initial generation of images which are then later translated into pictures: either embroidered, woven, or painted. These ‘sights’ in time assumed further embodiment in the paintings commissioned by kings that illustrated the myths, legends, and the songs of the poets. These paintings were—and still are—always fixed and located within a particular physical situation, the domain and territory of the king: that is the basic ground and plane for the songs and pictures which we refer to in this present essay.

The exhibition portrays a sequence of forty rulers and each picture demonstrates a particular narrative, myth, or rite concerning these chiefs, the *rajas* and *maharajas*. The nature of historical documentation which reflects events beginning in the Eleventh Century C.E. is amorphous and what exactly constitutes an *event* in the historical record is often derived from either poetry, folklore, or perhaps even sculpture or embroidery. Pre-literacy organises the past in fashions that are not what we now consider rational, sequential, nor perhaps even inferentially valid, and it is this kind of reference or semantic frame which the current exhibition of paintings draws upon in its presentation. The key to understanding these works lies in metonymy: how the images and figures connect to the events, myths, and songs of a generally unrecorded past, and especially how these images relate to the philosophy and *ethos* of traditional *ksatriya* culture.

Also, as with any work of art or any cultural artefact, the paintings are metonymically connected with many of the traditions and schools of North Indian royal painting.⁵ The metaphors of the work are taken from the myths and poems which have become attached to the various kings during the centuries that the Jhala clan have been established, first at Patadi 1093, then at Santalpur 1304, then Mandal 1408 then Kankavati 1425 then Halvad 1488 and finally at Dhrangadhra 1783 C.E. respectively. The paintings present a visual synthesis of many North Indian pictorial

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³ In the Appendix to McGrath (2015), I have examined in summary form the nature of epic pre-literacy.
⁴ I exclude all reference and discussion of embroidery and weaving and that kind of image generation from the present essay as this is a topic in its own right and another field of study and research. The singing of patterns and the weaving of images is a long established artistic medium. For this refer to Tuck (2006) and Frater (1995).
⁵ These schools include the techniques and manners of Marwari, Deccani, Kotah, Pahari, Mewari, Bundi and Mughal styles of work.
traditions and styles inherited from the Rajput lineages of Mewar, Marwar, Harodti, Pahari, Kutchi and others with whom the Jhallesvars were tied in marriage and with the Mughal with whom they fostered alliances of war and peace, in this post-modern rendering which has come to us via the informed inspiration of Jayasinhji Jhala. The literary model for many of the heroic Jhalavari songs is derived from the late bronze age Epic Mahabharata, an Indo-Aryan poem that describes how two clans—one founded upon a matrilineal system of kinship and one founded upon the patriline—fought for dominance of North-western India in the First Millennium B.C.E., what in fact led to a period of partition in the kingdom or bheda.

In the region of Jhalavari one of the earliest visual representations of heroes and kings, or rather of deceased heroes and kings, occurred in the small bas-relief carvings of the memorial stones which even today can be seen throughout western Gujarat. These stone pillars, palias, set deeply and firmly into the earth, record the death of warriors in battle; sometimes there are short inscriptions beneath the image detailing the identity and achievements of the warrior. Interestingly, there are also corresponding sati stones, which document the demise of the hero’s spouse who heroically ascended the funeral pyre of her fallen husband. These monuments date from about the Sixteenth Century and they are often found nowadays outside of shrines or temple precincts where they receive offerings and worship in their own right. The name and deeds of the original deceased hero are usually long forgotten, this being a case where ritual is sustained even though the accompanying myths have been forsaken.

I first encountered the Jhala family through Jayasinhji Jhala, who invited me to Dhrangadhara in 2002, just after the earthquake of that year. What ensues in this present essay draws upon my own personal memoir of time spent in and about that district’s territory, particularly in light of my understanding of the epic Mahabharata, a late bronze age poem of which I am a scholar.

Hence I came to this remarkable and exceptional collection of Jhala paintings as a student of preliterate culture, as one who attempts to reconstruct the connectivity which exists between images and words, between pictures and language, the visual and audial; attempting to realise the activity of social and historical recollection which such works of art constellate as past signs enabling a group of people to secure a present mutual coherence. Such aesthetic integrity works with the media of both the literate and the painterly, as well as with conventional morality and paradigms

6 Kalhoro (2010) has made a study of such palias or kirti-stambhas in the region to the west of Jhalavar. His work is an ongoing research project and further surveys and materials are forthcoming.

7 One of the paintings in the Collection illustrates such a moment; this is painting No. 6.3, showing the funeral pyre of Raj Udesinhji 1408 who is about to be cremated along with his principal wife who cradles his head in her lap. Painting No. 3.15 illustrates how such heroic femininity can translate even into the Goddess herself, Shakti-Ma.
of mythical hierarchy. These are some of the concepts and methods with which I have composed this present chapter, drawing upon the practical relation between the sound and phonemes of poetry, the iconography of painting, and the coded expressions of an ancient character. Literacy and visual depiction generate each other—particularly in terms of metaphor—and so convey a certain ethical or spiritual right in that expression.

Figure 3.1: Palia headstones of fallen warriors at the village of Malwan.

Let us now address seven of the foremost paintings or groups of painting in the collection and examine the corresponding poetry and see what these pictures can tell us about both past and present Jhalavari and ksatriya custom. These important works will lead us toward a larger comprehension of the arrangement of the collection itself and to the underlying philosophy and phenomenal models of Jhalavari ethos.

Firstly, “The sound of the swordplay rings, heads fall from bodies, Rajput bodies are being cut to bits and pieces, piles of corpses are growing … Rajputs of true valour are going to heaven, apsaras (divine maidens) are marrying heroes whose necks they garland with flowers, crying ‘har, har, Rajputs leave life!’ … The battle continued for three days and Maharana Sri Khetaji fought without his head all the way to the gates of Kudni until his body fell. So the entire force of Khetaji gained fame in death.” These are some of the words that are traditionally said to relate painting No.3.2 which
illustrates moments from the battle of Jhalesvara Raj Durjansalji, c.1160-83, with the army of Sultan Muhamed Ghuri. In the next painting, No.3.3, the king accepts the formal submission of his opponent.

The painting is in the form of three horizontal registers. In the lower band, the dead warriors are being eaten by ghouls and demons, a scene that is in the genre of Epic Mahabharata where the battlefield is always described in terms of its human carnage and the consumption of blood and limbs by supernatural beings and scavenging birds; this is especially true in Book XI of the epic, the Stri parvan. This lower level of the painting illustrates a conception of the underworld and there the wreckage of deceased warriors fuels subterranean livelihood; this is the inferior region of the tripartite cosmos where material transition occurs, where the deceased find themselves before being reborn once again back into the terrestrial level.

In the middle and dominant order—and this occupies half the area of the painting—there is the scene of battle itself, with Rajputs in white apparel led by their haloed king in crimson gear and their opponents in darker costume. Three of the warriors are headless as they fight, one of their hands grasping the severed head whilst the other wields a sword. In the upper band of the picture which is supernal—and the painter has bevelled the surface of the battlefield there in order to supply an impression of the earth’s curvature—there are divine and winged beings upon a carmine sky along with a central incandescent sun which secures the spirits of the fallen heroes, both Muslim and Hindu.

All of this is familiar to a Jhalavari audience insofar as much of the imagery replicates the poetry and metaphors of the Sanskrit Epic Mahabharata; by metonymy the painting and its corresponding poem connects with ancient bronze age heroic literature, particularly as represented in the four Kuruksetra Books, VI-IX of the epic text. Within that poetry war and combat are made beautiful and death receives an aesthetic qualification, for there is nothing that is purely horrific or awful and the poets engage with many metaphors of beautiful trees or mountains which supply a pleasing and aesthetic likeness to heroic endeavour. This is similar to how the painter of the exhibits in this present collection formalises the acts of destruction and physical violence into a perfectly poised composition that is visually satisfying: the chromatic qualities of the paintings and their formally balanced organisation brings to the translation of death and disorder something timelessly beautiful.

Battle, it is to be recalled, is what supplies a ksatriya, a king, with his legitimacy of rule, and it is from such focal moments in time that the subsequent danda, ‘orderly government’ is established. These paintings then, in many instances, where such occasions of successful warfare are represented, mark the actual navel, the ‘yoni or ‘origin’, ‘source’ of Jhalavar hegemony. The paintings, illustrating events or myths—
Figure 3.2: Jhallesvar Raj Durjanshalji at the Battle of Gadraghatta, Mt Abu, 1178.
songs and stories—about events, thus also supply an ongoing legitimacy to both governance and culture and received *ksatriya* codes and norms of conduct.

Death is the great criterion or signal for *ksatriyas*, the warrior community who are depicted in these works. The particular emotion that is part of such pictures or songs of conflict and annihilation is that of grief, not of anger; the battle paintings thus depict an affect that concerns death and loss rather than anger and violence. The principle of kingly rule is that of compulsory force or the power of punishment, just as the principle of brahminical order is accorded by the practice of solemn ritual and the fire sacrifice. The warrior’s willingness to approach death and to die by the sword is conceptually akin to the brahmin priest’s submission to the cosmic hierarchies as formulated in his hymns and rites, and the farming caste’s willingness to work and to labour upon the land. All three kinds of action create value or meaning in life and their primary agency is actually semantic rather than productive, for human value is not natural but must be created or be made by some kind of work or effort. Hence meaning is produced from the natural world via such procedures: death for the *ksatriya*, the ritual for a brahmin, *georgic* labour for the farmer or herdsman. The former is the subject for so many of these warrior paintings, where the heroes and kings are shown in moments which either cause death or submit to death.

I would argue that the sword is the primary metaphor in *ksatriya* culture and the one metaphor that goes toward the generation of all other metaphor; it is the sign in an iconographic sense, the master signifier that leads to the creation of all signification and meaning for both kingship and heroic culture. This is what the anthropologist Marcel Mauss referred to as *mana*, that almost prediscursive and undisclosed signifier which causes all other semantic reference to occur and to exist.

The instrument of death, the sword is of course vitally linked to the generation of duality in this warrior culture insofar as it is the weapon of the hero and combat is by definition fundamentally dualistic; the sword cuts and makes twofold. One can see in painting No. 3.2. a practical duality at work, between the Rajput warriors and their opponents, schematised in the central register of the picture. Above and below this band duality is again represented by the aerial and the subterranean, situated on either side of the terrestrial. Duality, I would argue, is a profound and essential

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9 The Homeric Iliad is a poem that is an expression of how human beings might secure mental and emotional equilibrium in the face of absolute loss; the poem is of course a demonstration or work of complete warrior ethos, it is a *ksatriya* poem. King Yudhisthira in Epic Mahabharata is similarly greatly driven by his extensive feelings of grief, especially in the second half of the poem. Grief is more intrinsic to the human condition than even the knowledge supplied by love and affection, for the latter are—in their ontology—physiological in nature, whereas grief and the comprehension of loss are phenomena that are thoroughly historical.

10 See Mauss (1902-03). In Lacanian psychoanalysis it is the *phallos*—that prediscursive signifier which exists prior to all other signifiers and which is essentially hypothetical—which is the one and primary sign which generates all subsequent signification in a language or a culture.
component of the *ksatriya* vision of belief and life’s *praxis*, and one can view this model in both the present painting and in the subsequent picture, No. 3.3, where the defeated army of Muizz-ud-din Muhamad Ghuri surrenders at Gadaraghatta near Mount Abu in 1178 C.E.11

**Figure 3.3:** Jhallesvar Raj Durjanshalji, commanding General of Gujarat, accepts the surrender of the defeated forces of Muizz-ud-din Muhamad Ghuri at Gadaraghatta in 1178.

By duality I mean not simply structural form but also narrative organisation, for duality can be construed as both synchronic and diachronic. This natural duality or

11 I argue this point extensively and in detail in McGrath, *Arjuna Pandava, The Double Hero in Epic Mahabharata* (forthcoming). In the Hala Jhala ra Kundaliya, a Seventeenth Century song written by the Caran Isardassji and translated by Jayasinhji Jhala, the poem commences with the verse: “Like lions the Hala and Jhalas—Jasaji and Rayasinhji—will fight. Will they capture the lands of the enemy? Will they give up their lands into the hand of the enemy? That man who establishes authority over the enemy’s lands, who crushes their heads into dust, to such a man’s enemy’s wives sleep is never deep. It is certain the Hala’s homes will be torn.” The Homeric Iliad is similarly organised on such a dualistic pattern where *doubling* is essential to the movement of the narrative and, I would argue, fundamental to the cognitive process of poetic composition. It is a poetic technique, like the *fugue* or the musical use of counterpoint.
symmetry of cognitive process on the part of the painter or the poet is founded upon the warrior’s or the king’s act of both contention and the possibility of contention. It is the corollary act of bloodshed that goes to define the boundaries of a king’s domain and in Sanskrit the word *maryada*, which indicates ‘boundary’ or ‘frontier’, ‘limit’, has the folkloric etymology of ‘that which devours young men’, or an object which acts as a marker for those who perished in the defence of the clan terrain. Thus the topography of a region itself is linked to the death of warriors who submit to their destruction as they go out to protect the kingdom; the blood of the heroes stains the domain with the king’s propriety. The fundamental purpose in life of a *ksatriya* or king is, of course, to protect the land: in that significance lies the etymology of the word (McGrath, 2004, Ch. 2 and 3). A king protects not simply his subjects but metonymically the landscape itself. The hero stones—memorial tributes to dead warriors and sometimes to their wives—the *palias* or the *stelae* that one still finds deeply fitted into the earth of Western Gujarat are thus defining that terrain as belonging to a king and his lineage (Sontheimer, 1989; Kalhoro, 2010). In that sense then the death of the warrior in battle actually provides an index for kingdom and rule. What we have in these battle paintings are the images of such mortal submission and triumph: *jaya* or ‘victory’ in the full sense of the word, triumph over opponents and triumph over death itself. For a warrior to perish so gloriously and valiantly is for him to succeed absolutely in life; this is the central teaching of the Bhagavad Gita, the chariot song which lies at the heart of Epic Mahabharata.

Concerning this idealisation of terrain and the metaphorical yet physical *body* of kingship and kingly presence, in some of these paintings a prancing hare is charmingly depicted—as in Nos. 3.4, and 7.5—relating to the myth in which *raja* Rajodharji was spiritually directed toward the establishment of Halvad citadel through his encounter with this animal in 1487. The poets describe this scene, saying: “A courageous hare stood before his horse, and the hare confronted the horse. Seeing the bravery of the hare, Rajodharji understood: ‘this earth has the power to raise heroes’, he thought. ‘This Hare is a celestial being … an avatar force … this is a celestial being. This earth, this ground is valorous, a cradle of heroes. Therefore, my new capital I will establish here. It is a land of heroes.’” Again, one observes the terrestrial association between the physical world and rulership, for these two earthly agencies are thoroughly integrated and bonded for such is the essential nature of kingly *rationale* in this culture: to protect the land not only by force but by virtue of

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12 In the poem Hala Jhala ra Kundaliya the poet claims, “Like little streams blood flows from the dead warriors ... O heroes, it is good to die, by dying stories of heroes will live. They are the true men. A short life is good as their name will spread throughout the world ... By fighting in battles their fame is like the moon and sun and true heroes are those who at the right moment sacrifice themselves and attain glory.”

13 These lines are taken from a film recorded in the summer of 2014; the title of the film is, *The Halo of Heroes*. Personal communication, Jayasinhji Jhala.
a mystical and at times epiphanic communication. Hares live in the ground, in folds in the earth, and it is thus that the actual terrain possesses causality in the myths of origin and so becomes personified not simply as the deity Shakti-Ma but also as the various creatures of the earth and sky who communicate to the kings and heroes their destiny: the endlessly ongoing destiny in time of the Jhala lineage. In general, there are many animals and birds to be seen in all of these paintings, as earthly and aerial witnesses of the deeds, events, and celebrations that are here recorded. As the contemporary Twentieth Century poets say, “In this brave Jhalavad land the fame of Jhala kings and valour is ever present. Jhalesvara Raj Rajodharji built this beautiful royal palace five hundred years and more ago and it is a shining tower of history. Despite the slaps of time it stands proud. Even now its Goddesses reside here. It walls are shining with the blazing power of the deity Shakti-Ma.”

Figure 3.4: Jhallesvar Raj Rajodharji encounters the Valiant hare at Halvad, 1487.

14 Ibid.
By extension, the headless warrior, a *motif* that figures in several of these paintings is a sign of the resolution and moral probity or purity of the warrior; a fighter who is so ethically and physically correct or ‘right’—and the word *raja* stems from this idea of rule in a linear sense or right—that, despite losing his head he is still able to continue...
in combat and will achieve victory. In a famous poem about Raja Raisinhji there is the line, “Ksatriyas fight even when their heads are cut from their bodies”, for such is their tenacious valour and warrior vigour and probity. In painting No. 3.6 this idea of the headless fighter is most beautifully presented by a picture where seven warrior kings are seated in profile upon the sand each holding his head which faces another similarly arranged figure; at the centre is the personified Sun, Surya, who looks out of the painting at the viewer. The scene is taken from a story about Raja Ajoji, who ruled briefly at the end of the fifteenth century. The notion of a headless warrior is of course a most ancient and Indo-European image and the Old English poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is perhaps our most common Western song in this tradition.

Figure 3.6: Seven Jhala heroes. Father Jhallesvar Raj Ajoji, son, grandson, great-grandson and beyond, sacrifice their lives for their kingdom Mewar. Fell at Khanwa 1527, Chittor 1534, Chittor 1535, Chittor 1568, Haldighati 1576, Ranakpur 1609, Hurda 1622.

15 In Nos. 3.4, 3.5, and 3.10, of the paintings.  
16 Line in film Halo of Heroes.  
17 Concerning the Indo-European or Indo-Aryan poetic and cultural tradition see Benveniste (1969), Nagy (1974 and 1979), Jamison (1994), Fortson (2004), West (2007) Frame (2009) Witzel (2012), to name but a few scholars in this field. There is also the mytheme of the poet’s singing head—as with the Greek Orpheus—which possesses such poetic or spiritual fortitude after death and the dismemberment of the body that the poems and songs continue to issue from his mouth.
Likewise, in painting No. 3.7, a scene from the Mahabharata Epic is presented in which the Sanskrit hero Karna removes his inborn breastplate, a natural cuirass, along with his innate ear-rings and offers these to the deity Indra who is disguised as a brahmin mendicant. Once again there is the depiction of the nobility and moral clarity of the warrior who is able to surrender his invulnerability and mortality at the mere request of a priest.\textsuperscript{18} The hero is so morally immaculate that cutting and removing part of his body—despite the pain and the consequent vulnerability—that he is able to accomplish this terrific act, such is the warrior’s generosity and bravery. The hero is in complete disregard of death or corporeal suffering and it is more significant for him to make such a demonstration of his non-attachment to material, worldly conditions, objects, or even to life itself; again, this is the ultimate message of the Hindu Bhagavad Gita, a ksatriya song that is the central element in the warfare scenes of Epic Mahabharata (McGrath, 2014).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.7.png}
\caption{Karna, hero of the \textit{Mahabharata}, gifts his armor to his foe.}
\end{figure}

Heroes and ksatriya warriors are supposed to always give on request, it is their ethical duty in life never to refuse, especially to refuse a brahmin, and they are not attached to any mere aspect of life. Obverse to this is their duty to punish any behaviour that

\textsuperscript{18} I have written about this scene as it appears in the Pune Critical Edition of Epic Mahabharata in McGrath (2004, Ch. 4, 2).
exceeds or diminishes correct dharma or ‘appropriate manner’, ‘decorum’. In fact there is an unspoken code—as it were—that prescribes the moral obligations of a king and warrior and many of the paintings in the present collection represent such an ethos. Thus the notion—or actually the ideal—of the headless warrior is part of this culture of practical truthfulness: the speech of a king or warrior is inviolable to such an extent that his words constitute a speech act and possess an unbreakable efficacy.19 The integrity of a hero is therefore so inherently profound and matchless that for him to continue fighting even without his head is emblematic of his moral steadfastness and warrior tenacity. J.D. Smith in a beautiful rendering of the Rajasthani Epic of Pabuji, relates of a similar account of a headless warrior (J.D. Smith, 1991).

Secondly, the next painting in the sequence, No. 3.8, portrays Raj Ranoji dancing with women of the family at the Navratri festival in c.1515. The refrain to the dance-song is, Haq padi vinar jagyo re, “The shout is out, warriors wake up”. In this round dance the king is at the centre of the movement and in the years following this initial event—the performance shown in the painting—the song came to be part of the repertoire of the women in the zenana, ‘the women’s quarters’. In the present recording on the Halvad website the performance is by a group of women and not by a single poet; it was to accompany a group of men and women moving in a clockwise formation, two steps forward one step backward, the tempo being sustained and amplified either by the clapping of hands or the tapping of sticks held up by the hands: this latter gesture is represented in the painting. Jayasinhji Jhala writes, “it can be performed with sticks and also with bucklers and batons in a more war-like manner. When this kind of performance happens some of the singers may ululate by making high sounds with their tongues in a celebratory manner. The dance can be danced in a frenzied state of high energy and hearkening awareness and non-awareness.”20

“The shout is out warriors wake up, the horns of war sound. Friends, bring warrior weapons ... Sesodhiya warriors painted themselves in blood ... the torso fights whilst holding its head in its hand. Look, at the protectors of honour (rang).” It is notable that such a genial and light-hearted portrayal of kingly pastime is associated with a battle chant; so intimately entwined are the male and the feminine aspects of ksatriya culture in which the men are happily prepared to perish in order to protect their clan members and the womenfolk are equally prepared to accept heroic death upon the funeral pyre of the fallen warrior. In this sense union in death is ultimately a far stronger bond than union that comes of living affection.

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19 Refer to Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) on the philosophy of the speech act or ‘how to do things with words’. For speech acts veracity is not important but the success of accomplishment, the power of causality, denotes the valence of such a kind of language: a speech act is ideally efficacious. A speech act is neither true nor false but only effective or not effective.

20 The complete text of a performance of this song, first recorded in 1979 by Jayasinhji Jhala, can be found at: The Harvard Library of World Music, Cambridge MA and at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Mumbai under the Dhrangadhra Music Collection.
Figure 3.8: Raj Jhallesvar Raj Ranoji dancing the famous rasada *Haq Pade Vinar Jagjo* with the women of his family and court during the Navratri festival, 1515.
There are eighteen dancers in the picture, sixteen of whom circulate about the double figure in the centre, and there are two opposing groups of women in the lower part of the frame who play drums and tambourines and who sing and clap. It is night in the zenana with the moon rising above the palace walls into a clear blue starry sky; two groups of trees are matched on either side of the painting and two oriel windows—the emblem of the clan—are depicted beneath the white rising planet and two peacocks are standing and observing all this at the bottom of the frame. The king is portrayed with a halo, a nimbus of pale blue outlined in gold. Not only in the battle paintings therefore, do we observe this visual organisation of symmetry, but also in the pictures where warrior pleasures and dalliance are portrayed.

As we stated above, this compositional form of duality is both profound and central to ksatriya conceptions of life and manner, being the initial premise to heroic philosophy in an almost syllogistic fashion. Certainly, in these paintings, this is typically the pattern of visual semantics. In the dance is implicit the bond between wives and warriors, the ineradicable and indissoluble symmetry of these men and women, a conjunction that will continue as far as death itself. Also in the dance—in terms of Hindu Saiva belief as expressed by the divine dancer himself, the Nataraja or ‘lord of the dance’—the eternal and cosmic ballet of the deity supplies tempo and rhythm to the nature of all beings, to the frequency of life and death. Here in the picture, the dance is circular and is thus potentially unending, until at last one of the warriors departs from the round in order to enjoin battle; it will then be the duty of the women to either celebrate his victory or to mourn and to grieve for his glorious death. Hence there is a poignance to this joyous little scene of delight insofar as the dualism of crossed staves in the resounding dance is metaphorically linked to the crossed swords of martial combat, a motif evinced in many of the other paintings.

Thirdly, in painting No. 3.9 Raja Arjunsinhji, who flourished at the outset of the Thirteenth Century, is shown offering a herd of white Jhalavar Wadhiyari cattle at the temple of Visnu Caturbhuja in Dvaraka. The temple is surrounded by a sea of dark waves and the composition of the picture is as usual organised in terms of duality, many double images—either in opposition or addorsed—focussing about the uniform image of the building with its vertical bipartition of images: at the lower level above the sanctum where a four-armed statue of Visnu is stationed; and higher, in the spire itself is the superior image of the Goddess, Shakti-Ma, the Jhala clan deity. She is represented in the aniconic manner of an upturned arm with the hand open and facing outward, what is referred to in Buddhist iconography

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21 Certain scholars, like Klostermeier (1984, 122ff.), would argue that Rudra-Siva is an indigenous divinity and not one of the Indo-Aryan deities that arrived in the Sub-Continent when the Vedic peoples migrated into the North-Western regions.
as the *abhaya mudra*, ‘fear not’: a gesture typical of Buddhhas and *bodhisattvas* in sculptural form. It is notable that the clan divinity is established as the superlative element in this temple, above all else. So much of the picture’s symmetrical form is rendered emphatically by the doubling of bovine horns in the lower register of

*Figure 3.9:* Jhallesvar Raj Arjunsinhji Dwarkadasji 1210-1240, gifts a herd of Wadhiyari cows to Chaturhbuja Vishnu at Dwarka by the sea.
the work, the darkness of the horns sharply delineated upon a whiter ground of the animals’ bodies; there being twenty-four head of cattle.22

This painting records what must have been a successful campaign to the western reaches of Gujarat peninsula—far from the clan citadel at Patadi—and the devotion of the king not to the clan deity but to Visnu. The accompanying poem—and the painting was inspired by these verses—claims: “Lord of the Jhalas, Arjunsinh, champion of the eternal Dharma, came to Dvarka with an unimaginable force. With fierce sword he liberated Vradmanpur ... he subdued the citadels ... Arjun establishes the seat of the Goddess Shakti-Ma in the shikhara, ‘the spire’.”23

Cattle rustling has always been a vital social practice in pastoral societies and is a thematic feature of much Indo-European poetry. The painting 3.10, along with painting No. 6.10, illustrates a moment where the hero or the king has proceeded about the kingdom towards the various directions, what in Sanskrit is referred to as the digvijaya, ‘victory over the compass points’. In this fashion the poem states that, “Arjun Makhavana offered much wealth and profound obeisance. In the north is Badrinath, in the east Jaganath is worshipped; in southern lands, Ramesvaram, but everywhere Dvarkadhes is honoured.” Heroes in epic often proceed in such a geographical manner in order to secure material and verbal tribute from subject domains in a period prior to a major kingly sacrifice, like the Rajasuya, ‘the royal anunction’, or the Asvamedha, ‘the horse sacrifice’.24 These pictures represent such kinds of ‘progress’ where the royal impress and authority is established either by the journey of the king in person but more usually by the movement of the heroes who enter into contest with whatever other heroes might oppose them.

22 A poem exists that praises this king; the text is here translated by Jayasinhji Jhala. Harpaldevji’s son, Sodhaji, a great grandson, king of the seat of Patadi / Lord of the Jhalas Arjunsinh, general rann of Gujarat’s king / Champion of the sanatan dharma / Came to Dvarka with an unimaginable force / With a fierce sword he liberates Vradhpur / With cavalry, elephants, and chariots and infantry he subdued all the fortresses / Marching in a great circle with brave demeanour he strengthens the sovereignty of the king / Through jungles he comes to the main portals of the deity Jagdish’s temple at Dvarka to worship / Of all the grand lords of the realm he is the first lord / Facing the western sea on the edge of the coast he rebuilds the beautiful Shikhara / On Akhatrij day he unfurled the pennant of the deity / He offered much wealth, deep devotion, so we hail Arjun Makhavana / In the north Badrinath, in the east Jagannath / In southern lands Ramesvaram, but everywhere Dvarkadhes is worshipped.

23 This poem exists only in fragmentary form and was discovered in the collection of papers entitled the Puran Samgraha in the archive of his late Highness, the Maharaja Meghrajji III of Halvad-Dhrangadhra. It has been translated by his son, Jayasinhji Jhala.

24 I have discussed this ritual process of digvijaya, where the hero subjugates the various domains about a kingdom prior to kingly rites taking place, in McGrath (2017, Ch.2).
In this old culture cattle are important signifiers of material wealth and are most worthy tokens of exchange and the movement of livestock between individuals or communities is typically central to if not generative of many of the poetic narratives and myths. From Vedic times—pre-monetary times—the cow has always received great and honorific praise as an item of divinity and of beauty; it is the sacred object that is constantly being exchanged among social groups as a sign of hierarchy and relation. Cattle in such an economy are a medium of wealth that cannot be consumed but only given and received or stolen. In this particular picture we have a snapshot of such myth and society, where both divine and human hierarchies are momentarily realised.

Fourthly, painting No. 3.11 concerns Raja Mandalika III of Sorath whose capital was in Junagadh to the south-west; he was the head of the Chudasama clan and was marching with an army to marry Soma De—a Jhala princess and daughter of the Jhalesvara Bhimsinhji—in Sithapura, Jhalavad. In this picture Bhimsinhji is shown

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25 J.D. Smith (1991) has translated the Rajasthani Epic of Pabhuji where cattle theft and the subsequent offering of cattle to a divinity are central to the narrative.
with his force marching towards the *barat* or ‘groom’s party’ of Mandalika as they approach the realm of Jhalavar. The *raja* is portrayed seated in a *palanquin* at the centre of his army and his paramount splendour is indicated by the *aftab*, or ‘titular parasol’ that is held above his head.

Figure 3.11: Jhallesvar Raj Bhimdevji rides to receive his son-in-law Ra Mandalik III of Sorath, 1455.

This is one of the most magnificent pictures in the collection and a description of the march is given in an accompanying poem. There are elephants, cavalry, chariots, and infantry—the traditional four elements of an epic army—all carefully and precisely illustrated, and from a historical point of view this portrayal of a full Rajput force is thoroughly informative; there are even what appear to be items of early artillery, cannon drawn by teams of bullocks. The force moves horizontally over the desert terrain in perfect order and arrangement and the dignity of the moment is captured by the painter in the stillness of so much overtly tumultuous and noisy progress. The

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26 Sorath, Halar, Jhalavad, Gohilvad, and Kathiavar were the five princely regions of the Saurasthra peninsula, an area called Kathiawar by the British.
calmness and integrity of this army is underlined by the paratactic representation of the various armed figures, row upon perfect row of infantry with swords, horsemen with spears, even the clouds in the sky take on such paratactic organisation as if nature itself were aligned with and by the discipline of the Rajput force.

Here, it is not a composition of dual agencies or images that supplies the picture with its structure but the serial representation of identical components. Death is the demise of order into chaos and disorder and yet the ksatriya forces which administer this terminus are here perfectly depicted in their restraint and diverse unison. There is no indication of dis-order and this engine of death—the army—is here engaged in a nice instance of counterpoint, for what is actually being represented is a wedding party on its way towards marital union and sexual conjunction. What the painting represents is thus almost oxymoronic in its double message of martial force and the mystical joining of the male and feminine components of the universe. Both destruction and creativity are so defined in their potential by a faultless and flawless ordering of visual detail and its precise repetition.

The poem that accompanies this painting tells of the various other princesses of India and speaks of their qualities yet also of each one’s disadvantage; the poet gives names for fifteen of these kingdoms. Recounting a list of possible brides he specifically precludes them all: he says that one has no art of conversation, another speaks too fast and falters in her words, another is physically unright, another is overly-skilled in black magic, another’s hair is not good, another possesses hairy knees, another has long ears, and another is frigid and lacks amorous inclination, and so the poem proceeds. Only the daughter of Bhimsinhji is suitable. Many of the kingdoms of the Sub-Continent are mentioned in the poetry and not simply the traditional thirty-four Rajput lineages, and the song well illustrates the condition and state of princely rule at the time of the Fifteenth Century. What the poet is accomplishing—via the metaphors of all these rejected royal women—is not only a cataloguing of princely states but a denigration of their condition qua their improper and problematic womenfolk who are all flawed in their incomplete femininity—in comparison to the faultless perfection of the Jhala bride.

The poet describes in narrative detail events that occur in the progress of the barat, ‘the groom’s party’. “Having seen a beautiful and timid mare on the way, two horses threw off their riders and started to fight, but the mare went away. A harlot smiled mildly, seeing this … A cart of chief merchants broke down in a narrow way due to its heavy load; some pass over the cart lying there whilst others—because of their proud galloping horses—move ahead and some others halt … A courtesan who had fallen from her horse as it moved among rows of haughty camels is helped by someone and someone else tries to re-arrange her lower garment whilst another attempts to restrain

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27 The poem, the Mandalika Mahakavya, is a biography of Raja Mandalika and was composed by Sri Gangadhara.
her horse ... A poet sang a surprising panegyric for someone other than his king and another poet forbade him, saying ‘do not sing that song’, and he began wielding his sword as did the other ... The bridegroom Raja Mandalika enjoyed all this and other astonishing acts of his people; he observed the sound of the drums beaten to indicate his approaching meeting with the Jhala king.”

Figure 3.12: SomaDe daughter of Bhimdevji married Chudasama Ra Mandalik, ruler of Junagadh-Sorath. She was a poet tutored by poet Narsi Metha, 1455.

Then comes a lengthy metaphor, very much in the style of the four Kuruksetra Books, the battle books of the Epic Mahabharata, where it is said that, “The army is a powerful river, the king a great swan, the lotus were women and the infantry horde were beautiful like the uninterrupted waves of that river.” This is followed by another extensive simile, again in the exact style of the epic: “The city was festooned with strings of mango leaves and sprouts of bajra and houses were adorned with raised platforms of gems on coats and gems on couches onto which garlands of pearls were hung low and wide as if upon the peaks of the best mountains of silver.” The appropriation of imagery from the archaic late bronze age poem infuses and charges this pre-modern poetry with resonance, metonyms that engage with the ancient warrior culture of the Bharatas.
So much of this poetry that is connected with these paintings is of such a kind of formulaic nature, drawn from the First Millennium B.C.E. epic tradition, just as the painting themselves are made up of and organised according to the iconic traditions of West Indian visual culture of the early Second Millennium C.E. It is remarkable how uniform and coherent these distinct media are and even after thousands of years the synthesis of traditions possesses such resilient longevity and impulse. There is no impetus toward innovation here only the strength and flexibility come of cultural continuity and complexity, of renewal and virtuosity; this is so unlike the schools of Western European and American painting of the present and the last century where the imperative necessity towards innovative gesture governs so much artistic production.

It is this stability of tradition and of culture which does not seek to innovate but only to perfect and to renew that is emblematic of kingship in Jhalavar in the centuries preceding the twentieth century, with all its profound and brutal divisions. The shift away from a pre-monetary system of economy and a social order of loyalty and fidelity began with the movement towards secondary urbanisation in the middle of the First Millennium B.C.E., when the former coherence of a preliterate culture began to transform into a society where fungibility became the medium for social coherence, where price replaced affiliation.

What is being presented to the viewer in all of the paintings in this collection is a world where human association was once based upon affinity and an exchange of services, of allegiance, faith, and mutual reliance. There is thus an idealism at work here in that the pictures represent—in both the figuration of life and pleasure, of death and violence—an ideally balanced existence in which the natural world, the terrain and the kingdom, are integral components to such an economy of metaphor and of material as given in the pictures. This is a moral conviction profoundly inherent to the works and in apposition to the nature of production and consumption which exists in the present twenty-first century, where human affiliation is founded upon price and the conception of a market. The Mahabharata epic was likewise a retrojection of an idealised society in which many elements of spiritual, political, and social kinds of ideal harmony were synthesised and formed into a poetic composition that possessed all the appearance of unity and cohesion; it too was an ideal which due to its stylised and archaic syncretism was able to communicate both universal and conventional or social truths.

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28 On this point of transition between the pre-literate and pre-monetary to a more ‘modern’ form of social order refer to Wiser (1936) and McGrath (2017, Ch. III).
29 The American cinema of Wim Wenders or the conceptual antiquity of Nicolas Poussin or the dramatically realised historical kingship serialised in the plays of William Shakespeare are all of a similar formation, in that they all represent a syncretic and idealised past which, due to the unique and remarkable artistry of the creators, is able to convey a certain truth pertaining to the human condition.
**Fifthly**, in painting No. 3.13, which shows the Bhaktaraj Amarsinhji who flourished in the Nineteenth Century, we observe an unusual style on the part of the painter for the details of the image are reduced and thoroughly refined in favour of large blocks of pure colour. The king rides—without horse or vehicle—in one direction and a dark deer-like goat proceeds in counterpoint; above the king are geese in the sky, flying in both directions to the left and right. Again, the composition is based upon dual process and configuration. Unlike all the other paintings in the collection there are great areas of the picture which are simply pure colour and these supply the view with strong chromatic and visual distinction; there is a sensibility of great *élan* and swiftness and yet the composition is such that so much velocity becomes thoroughly stable and unmoving, beautifully and harmoniously poised.

![Figure 3.13: Poet Warrior Bhaktaraj Amarsinhji II meditates about the futility of war after the Battle of Vadvada in 1805 when Jhalas slaughtered Jhalas.](image)

This great king was a warrior poet whose devotional hymns are performed in Jhalavar even today. The present painting was inspired by a *bhajan* or ‘hymn of devotion’ which commences, “All wish to acquire Nirvana, all living souls wish to go towards Nirvana.”
Javun che Nirvana. Jivadane javun che nirvana re.
Cheti ne chalajo javun che Nirvana.
Rase jase praja jase rupari rani re.
Indra no Indraasana jase ane Indrani re.
Cheti ne chalajo javun che Nirvana.
All want to go to Nirvana, the soul wants to go to Nirvana.
Walk carefully, all want to go to Nirvana.
The king must go, the people must go,
even the beautiful Queen must go.
Divine Indra’s throne and Indrani will go.
Walk carefully, all want to go towards Nirvana.

What is surprising about this song is the synthesis of Buddhist, Indo-Aryan or Vedic, and modern Hindu notions of both cosmic and human predicament; as we have already observed, this is a conflation that is to be found in Epic Mahabharata, where many social and spiritual traditions are combined in a uniform single and ideally synoptic culture.

In the painting the divergent geese in the upper register are metaphors for the souls of the deceased warriors who fell at the battle of Vadvada, the final major battle that was fought in Jhalavat in 1805; a moment that marked the end of active and dynamic warrior culture in the region. It is telling that the finality of warrior culture as an historical phenomenon receives such a minimalist and stringent colouration, compared to all the other paintings, and it is as if the painter is expressing the mourning involved in such an historical instant: for melancholy and grief eliminate distinction and subdue all difference. The chromatic and figurative minimalism expresses this moment of conclusion and closure in which a thousand years of tradition and custom receive their *terminus* and all that follows—in one way or another—will be recapitulation rather than practice.30 In a sense then, this one picture is a summary emblem and clarification of the situation of Jhalavar today, with its changeless and timeless beauty refined and paused in the midst of dramatic action—activities that have been sustained for more than a millennium.

**Sixthly**, in painting No. 3.14 there is the posed scene of a wrestling match or *kusthi* where Raja Raisinhji who was to rule in the latter part of the Sixteenth Century is presented as the victor who has just defeated an opponent; he is shown vaunting above his fellow contestant. There is the usual symmetrical arrangement of composition aligned on either side of the two combatants, framing them as it were:

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30 By recapitulation I understand not simply the act of *re*-telling, but also of ritual activity, painting, sculpture, music, social manners, and the performance of poetry. It is *via* these various actions that a former world is recalled and recollected due to the intimations of metonymy, whereby all such experience is joined in one concatenation and reticulation with the present.
a duality of architecture, of peacocks, of seated audience, of courtiers who attend upon the Emperor Akbhar who observes the match, and in the counterpoint between a horse and an elephant. There exists a wonderful poem about this king, which makes the claim that the narrative is “immortal”. This particular painting of the wrestling match is an illustration of a moment toward the end of the poem’s narrative where the king, disguised as a *saddhu*, an ‘itinerant mendicant’, enters the lists and defeats the Emperor’s champion.

Earlier in the poem the young prince Raisinhji had made the statement, a threat, or what was in effect a speech act, that he was going to sound the drums of Halvad in the kingdom of his maternal uncle, what is in fact a challenge to combat. The song is a manifestation of *ksatriya* conduct or *dharma*, what amounts to ‘warrior decorum’. As we have already noted, the words of a *ksatriya* are irreversible and inviolable, “the

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31 This is a fifteenth century poem and this version was performed by Amrit Kalu in 2009 at Dhrangadhra.
32 This occurs beginning at point 29.54 in the poem.
word of a warrior does not turn back”, just as the true hero would never turn away or retreat. Similarly, a warrior should never strike another warrior in the back or whilst he sleeps and should always protect those who claim protection and those who are in pursuit of or in the practice of spiritual devotion; also, a right ksatriya woman will endure the heroism of death upon the funeral pyre of her husband who has fallen in battle, for such is the feminine corollary to a warrior spouse’s heroism.

The young prince and his elder relative join in combat; usually, the relation between a nephew and his maternal uncle is a profound and most intimate bond and so the conflict here possesses something of the horrible or deeply incorrect. The two forces engage and then the two protagonists contest with until the younger slays the other with a cast of a spear and in his dying the uncle calls upon his Kacchi Jadeja friend and relatives, Rao Khengarji and his brother Sahibji, to avenge him. This does happen, when the Jadeja Kacchi Rao sends a force lead by Sahibji. Sahibji and Raisinhji fight hand to hand at Malia on March 2nd, 1566. Sahibji is slain and Raisinhji, falls unconscious but is not slain and is carried away by a troupe of wandering mendicants. All this has preceded the wrestling bout, for Raisinhji had entered upon a life incognito after his defeat and it was only with this match of strength that his true and intrinsic power was to be uncovered. This contest then marks the instant when the disguise is revealed prior to the hero-king returning to defeat his enemy and retrieve the kingdom. In terms of the iconography it is as if the superlative hero is transformed from out of the body of the defeated and somewhat gross wrestler whom he has just vanquished: these are the two bodies of the narrative which have been almost fused by the painter’s art. Eventually, such is his heroic valour, that Raisinhji becomes a headless warrior and fights, and so even in death he remains superhuman.

Finally and in closing, let us now view these paintings from another dimension altogether and briefly examine how the feminine is thoroughly and strongly present in many of these works as an active agency critical to the practice and dynamism of animated kingship. In traditional and late bronze age North Indian society a king must possess a queen in order to be able to rule correctly. Let us see then how it is that the feminine appears in the pictures and thus how the feminine registers as a phenomenon in Jhalavari ksatriya culture.

33 Khengarji was the first Rao of all Kacch and was anointed in 1548 at Rapar, later moving his capital to Bhuji; he established the port of Mandvi in 1580.
34 In McGrath (2009), I have shown how the feminine in Epic Mahabharata plays both a generative and an active role in the organisation of the poem’s narrative. In pre-literate and pre-monetary culture women are vital signifiers in the creation of value and worth and it is their language which establishes the standards of ksatriya culture or dharma: they are the ones who speak such truths, whereas the fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, and nephews, are the ones who accomplish such practically. In both the Homeric epics and in both Epic Mahabharata and Ramayana the presence and role of the feminine is the initial motive agency that drives and resolves the progress of the narrative.
In the present series of the collection the Goddess herself appears in Nos. 3.15 and 5.2, both paintings illustrating events that occurred during the rule of Harpaldevji in the Eleventh Century. Harpaldevji was married to a woman who was in fact the Goddess personified and from this union the kingdom was first established and thence generated. In the former work she is portrayed surrounded by slender stylised flames and in the latter picture she is represented more conventionally as being mounted upon a lion and bearing various weapons in her prolific arms.

**Figure 3.15:** The Rajputani as SatiMa displays the fiery internal power essence or *tejasva* understood to reside in all women.

In painting No. 3.16, the Goddess along with Raj Vegadji who flourished in the fourteenth century, watches the destruction of the Sultan of Gujarat’s army caused by the intense monsoon rains sent by the deity herself in her mode as Meladi-Ma. This is the destructive aspect of the deity; she is one who generates the clan and the kingdom, and who oversees the protection of the domain in the face of attack and who—in this her negative phase—destroys all who oppose her mortal kin. This bivalent quality of the Goddess is a feature of both narratives and of iconography, she is literally and actively duplicitous.
Figure 3.16: Goddess MeladiMa destroys the army of the Sultan of Gujarat at the battle of Kadi in the 1350s by releasing a torrential rainstorm, as Raj Vegadji and his army watch.

In painting Nos. 3.17 the Rani Jijima is portrayed upon horseback with an *aftab* held up behind her receiving obeisance from an abject kinsman who presses his forehead upon her foot which is mounted in the stirrup. In the latter part of the Eighteenth Century she ruled from Dhrangadhra whilst her husband ruled from Halvad; her intrepid son, Jasvantsinhji II, re-united the two domains into a single kingdom again, establishing his throne at Dhrangadhra in 1783. Here the feminine assumes the position of royal dominance and there is no question of any veiling or of suppressed emotion as the Rani leads seven mounted warriors.

In picture No. 3.18 Raj Devrajji in the company of his women-folk visits the Little Rann and a flamingo colony that was then located in that region, situated near Kharagoda. In this painting there is a depiction of easy and mutual happiness and the party—mounted on camels—proceeds along the edge of the Rann, a salt desert or the eponymous Floating Desert. As is usual with so much of the present work the figures are poised in dual form with each camel mounted by two riders; in fact, the painting at large is made up of two registers of riders portrayed against the cerulean and cyanine blue of the saline terrain where flamingos have built their raised mud nests. It is a charming image and typical of the collection’s graceful portrayal of women, where the male and the feminine are in happy accord and without any indication of dominance nor of any overbearing.
Figure 3.17: Rani JijiBa accepts the surrender of her brother-in-law Shesmalji on April 10 1758 at Dhrangadhra with her son Kunvar Jaswantsinhji and Muslim commander Muhamad Muchalo beside her.

Figure 3.18: Jhallesvara Raj Devrajji 1240-1265 with his wives visit flamingos in the floating desert.
There are many such scenes of joint amity and amusement in which a king and the royal women are shown either physically close or in pictures where the women-folk play an active role in celebrating a royal rite: as in painting No. 3.19, where Raj Ramsinhji who ruled from 1368-1385, is shown ploughing the first sacred furrow at the onset of the rainy season whilst his women observe and encourage him with the beating of drums. This is one of the many rites of kingship that the collection depicts, the image of ritual being substituted for the presentation of historical events, which, of course, engages with a different understanding of conceptual time.

In No. 3.12 the princess Soma De who lived in the latter half of the fifteenth century is shown in a beautiful and finely but lightly detailed composition gesturing at a golden oriel in a garden; a small fawn is beside her. In No. 3.20 is picture of love-making atop an elephant; in No. 6.9 there is a delightful zenana scene where a raja finds happiness in the companionship of his wives and their kind. In painting No. 3.21 there is another

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35 In painting No. 3.20, where the amorous couple are portrayed in an intimate embrace there are six simultaneous actions occurring at that moment of insemination. The raja impregnates his consort as he sips from a bowl of wine and also as he shoots dead a boar that is being hunted; his beloved smokes from a hookah and speaks with a small green parrot that sits on her right hand during the love making. Emblematic of all this, below the elephant a woman dances with a peacock. Such unity of actions is typical in so many of the paintings and mere serial time is often so compressed and supplied with dimension. There is much light-hearted joy in many of the works as well as the business of martial endeavour.
zenana scene—illustrating a moment in the Seventeenth Century at Halvad—where two women are shown at play with a board game, chopat; they are surrounded by three symmetrically matched groups of onlookers on either side. In painting No. 3.22, Raj Jhalakdevji disports in a tank with his zenana women during the heat of a summer afternoon, the jalakrida so fondly sung of by the early classical Sanskrit poets.

Figure 3.20: In the same instant Jhallesvar Raj Satarsalji knows the pleasures of sex, the hunt, and the glorious dawn, 1408-1420.
Figure 3.21: Two Solanki sisters, UmaidkunvarBa and ShamkunvarBa, the wives of brothers Jhallesvar Raj Askaranji and Kunvar Amarsangji play chopat, 1634.

Figure 3.22: Jhallesvara Raj Jhalakdevji 1185-1210 and his family, with members of the royal antarpur enjoy water sports in a tank during summer at Patadi.
Amorous dalliance and such gallant intimacy in this royal culture is as important an activity as warfare and the deployment of arms. Just as in so many of the paintings the composition is organised in dual patterns, so this patterning is extended into the realm of cultural disposition itself, where the erotic is as symbolically important as the thanatic and destructive. This in itself is the double aspect of the Goddess, she is profoundly and originally creative but she also bears weapons and can easily annihilate the opponents of her realm: she kills with as much facility as she brings about procreation. As we have argued above this dualism is the fundamental metaphor of ksatriya culture as represented by the present Collection of paintings; it is also an intrinsic quality of Mahabharata poetics qua the world of ksatriyas.

It is as if the double in both literature and in iconography is an aspect of cognitive functioning, so prevalent is it in both verbal narrative and in pictorial exempla. In this old warrior culture duality and the double are structurally and in terms of narrative movement profoundly and intrinsically at work in the generation of meaning, image, and value. Certainly in the pictures which we have examined and in almost all of the Collection this model stands true. An efficient warrior must also be a fine lover, his vitality is always twofold; he kills with as much elegance as he propagates.

It is the present attunement of poetry, muthos, painting, architecture, and folklore, that sustains this ksatriya heritage as presented to us in the present collection. Socially this is an ongoing narrative of so many representational dimensions which nowadays even includes the medium of cinema (Mankekar, 1999). It is the figure of the hero—as king and as warrior—that stands at the focus of such narratives: the hero within and upon the landscape and the hero as a mortal character who is able to engage with both superhuman and supernatural forces in the cosmos, for nothing in these stories and poetry and in the paintings is merely mundane and diurnal.

Myth can be conceived of as a lens, an objective presence through which the sensible and material world is activated: thence a message is perceived as it registers upon or imprints the human psyche. I would argue that myth is thoroughly fundamental in this action insofar as it actually structures the organisation of the psyche. It is an invisible and purely original agency in that sense, a mental energy which we apprehend and conceive of in terms of the various narrative media: in the present case, that of painting. In this fashion, human behaviour thus becomes necessarily and profoundly mimetic.

There is also the concomitant and simultaneous presence of metaphor insofar as all myth is composed of metaphors. True human agency only occurs in the hypostatic or natural forms of human thought and emotion, or, as some would even aver, in the practice or act of perception itself. Metaphor, qua myth hence supplies the fundamental tissue of social culture, the paradigms and media of perception; hence the indelible power of myth as picture, as poetry, and as the lore that adheres about certain topographical points upon the earth’s surface. The work of the humanist consists in the effort which moves toward the recognition and comprehension of how
such metaphor operates: what is the *nature* of that lens, or more specifically, what is that lens?\(^\text{36}\)

It is within the patterning of myth that the basic interdictions and exchanges—the two forces that lie at the heart of all human organisation, of intellectual and moral life—are to be located. These exchanges can be sexual, they can be with death itself, they can be the economic transition of things, or perhaps the engagement with the supernatural *ideas* that exist and occur upon a particular terrestrial situation—the deities. It is the interdictions or the prohibitions which establish the ground or the moment for such exchanges; death and birth being the primary metaphor of such instances, as warfare and pleasurable dalliance and coition. As the poets say, “The kings will go, the people will go and go also will beautiful queens. Time only remains, and the people’s eternal story.”\(^\text{37}\) Even time however is conceived of in terms of the verbal and the visual, for time is composed of and by the movement of shadow.

The innovative drive of the present collection of paintings has rejuvenated this story and translated many and various diverse threads of former cultural communication and *muthos* into a new system of expression; this is the genius of Jayasinhji Jhala and his team of artisans, the poets and film-makers, the painters, the ethnographers and historians. It is the imagery borne of battle and martial conflict, of heroic prowess, of amorous flirtation and gaming; images of themes and *motifs* that have been drawn from a particular historical and mythical font, that move us toward an understanding of how the composition of Jhala consciousness has been formulated and rephrased through time, here depicted in the Collection and its present exhibition. In that sense then the pictures offer us a complete cosmology of Jhalavari cultural inheritance and a timely insight into one more aspect of complex human experience.

This is the world of timeless Jhalavar, re-invented and renewed by Jayasinhji Jhala, combining the media of modern technology and the artistry of a masterly Rajasthani painter of Ajmer and drawing upon the many various and sophisticated North Indian styles of representation as well as upon the *mythemes* and narrative manners of the Sanskrit Epic Mahabharata and the manifest tradition of subsequent warrior poetry. As we have seen, this discrete portrayal of a thousand years of *ksatriya* culture in both its creative and its destructive aspects builds upon a system of dualities within the paintings themselves: joining a system of illustration with a system of mythology, both engaged in an identical or simultaneous form of *doubleness*.

Once, when the world was not as it is now, kings, heroes, and their divine companions and consorts—here particularly represented by the Goddess—used to roam at will together across the terrain and topography of what we now know as Jhalavar. They conversed and dined together and even at times fought together or

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36 What we are here referring to as a ‘lens’ is actually a linguistic composition, something that is made up of words, a verbal medium.

37 The final lines are taken from the film narrative of *The Halo of Heroes*. 
made love. The dry ground itself was the vehicle for such conjoint and harmonious life, the earthly world of what is presently Western Gujarat. This wonderfully vivid and beautifully executed collection of paintings revives that old and stable colloquium, bringing it back to life for us today in the early Twenty-First Century, vivaciously, happily, and yet momentarily.

What the paintings in this Collection are telling the viewer—and of course, the audience of the poetry which accompanies these images—is, *Warriors wake up, the shout is out!* This is a call to consciousness, to a renewed and renovated awareness of philosophical, historical, and thematic understanding of what it means to walk and to exist not only upon the terrain of contemporary Saurashtra but for anyone who stands upon this earth. The pictures re-mind us of not only that old world but of the realm where moral distinction and aesthetic understanding were common to life, where human merit was not distinguished by affluence or modes of material consumption but by a cosmic, ethical, and practical understanding of how one should behave in the natural world, in the environment into which one had been born and where it was probable that one would perish. It is such humanistic refinement of the ephemeral which makes life not simply durable but also remarkable, valuable, and transparently beautiful.38

**Bibliography**


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38 I am grateful to MK Jayasinhji Jhala and his wife Rani Rajkumari Rajasree, and to MK Siddhrajsinhji Jhala and his wife Rani Kanchande, for their great and extensive kindness and hospitality in Dhrangadhra on the several occasions when I have been fortunate to visit the region.


