CHAPTER 4

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NOVELS OF VARSHA ADALJA
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The women writers in Gujarat express through their works the day-to-day realities of women in Gujarat. Many women writers, writing in different Indian languages have made a mark in the literary world of our country. Varsha Adalja is definitely one of them. A writer of high repute, Varsha Adalja made a foray into the field of docunovel before it became fashionable. It is amazing to observe that Varsha Adalja started writing detective novels which became popular among readers at the age of twelve. It is worthy to mention the name of a very well-known Gujarati writer – Shri Gunvantrai Acharya, father of Varsha Adalja who after earning the reputation of a writer of romance moved to writing novels of social commitment. Like her father, Varsha Adalja also writes about the plight of tribals, lepers and women wronged by society. The three novels- Khari Padelo Tahuko, Ansaar and Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy, selected for the study show how the women protagonists face the unjust familial and societal norms and move towards empowerment.

Recipient of the Ranjitram Gold Medal (2005) Varsha Adalja is one of the most prolific writers of Gujarat. She was born on April 10, 1940 in Jamnagar in Saurashtra. Her father, Gunvantrai Achrarya, also a Ranjitram Gold Medal recipient, was an eminent writer of Gujarat and founder of the dramatic group called Rangbhoomi. Her sister Ila Arab Mehta is a reputed writer in her own right.

Although Adalja examines ‘women’s issues’ in many of her works, it would be incorrect to label her as a ‘feminist’ writer. For as she herself said in her speech at her award-winning ceremony, it was never her aim to propagate women’s rights. But as an artist with her feet firmly planted in her social milieu, she could not ignore the problems that women encounter in their daily lives. Her experience of writing for women’s magazines and working as editor of two such weeklies exposed her to these issues. Yet she brings to the portrayal of these issues a maturity and sensitivity, rarely upsetting the balance between what is traditionally expected of women as against their need to find their rightful place in the contemporary social set up. The selected novels- Khari Padelo Tahuko(The Crumbled Note of a Warbler), A and Maare Pan
Ek Ghar Hoy (A House of My Own), amply show this. She takes up issues linked to the social exploitation of women, but her approach is slightly different- subversion in Adalja comes from within. Mirroring the everyday life within the framework of family, she not only highlights the tensions but also the injustice, the exploitation and the compromises that a woman has to make. Traditionally, in any abnormal situation, it is the woman who must bear the brunt. Adalja captures such situations by identifying an issue not commonly talked about in society and literature, like schizophrenia, mentally challenged children, leprosy, or prison victims. She positions her women protagonists within such a framework. From there they then explore their various familial relationships – mother- daughter, daughter-father, sister-sister, wife-husband, and mother-son.

The novels also serve to map her literary trajectory. In a passage of time, one finds her moving from a straightforward narrative to more complex introspective deliberations. Khari Padelo Tahuko (The Crumbled Note of a Warbler) on the other hand is a more inward looking novel. It examines the relationship between a mother and a mentally challenged child. The protagonist of this novel, Vrunda, is at a crossroad of her life. At a time when the rift between her and her ambitious husband is widening she finds herself expecting a second child. Her hope of bringing the family together rests on the new baby. But life has something else stored for her. She finds out soon that her newly born daughter is mentally retarded. Vrunda’s struggle now shifts to coping with a whole new experience of the world of the mentally challenged. The novel traces Vrunda’s mental travails of not just coping with a disabled child but moving from being an insecure woman to a more resolute and confident woman who knows what to expect from life and how to deal with it.

Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy (A House of My Own) depicts the relationship between two sisters – Leena and her younger schizophrenic sibling Surekha. Leena has to give up everything – her desires, ambitions, happiness and even the person she loves, for her sister. In the process she swings between love and compassion to intense dislike and hatred for her are the focal point of the novel. The triumph of Leena lies not in just challenging her fate but in her ultimate acceptance and realisation of a greater truth and love. The love and compassion that she achieves at the end is all encompassing.
and profound. The novel is racy and replete with crisp dialogue – a quality that Adalja has mastery over, perhaps because of her close association with the theatre.

A deals with the social stigma of leprosy. The woman protagonist of the novel, Rupa discovers that she is suffering from leprosy. And soon her family members turn against her as they believe it as a divine curse. The novel shows skin deep nature of relationship at the time of crisis. The novel focuses on the suffering and trauma of lepers and through that it provokes the readers to ponder over such crucial matters.

These works are contemporary urban novels situated within the middle class/upper caste Gujarati families. In all the three novels we find the protagonists moving towards a position of empowerment not by breaking the societal norms but by redefining them. What is remarkable about the novels is the way she handles the time-shifts in the narration moving from the present to the past and back again to the present. She utilises the ‘stream of consciousness’ and ‘interior monologue’ techniques with great facility.

Her milieu was congenial to turn her into a writer. Many of her novels depict women’s problems in the contemporary world. The broad range of modern city life is also central to her writings. She delineates the true picture of modern metropolitan life. Her novels often portray a woman who has been marginalised and exploited but who gain strength and insight through those very experiences and develops resilience. Her novels are based on truth and profound knowledge of human behaviour. Her art is easily apprehensible.

We prominently find that her novels revolve around female characters come from the different strata of the society, but facing similar problems in the society. She delineates the predicament of modern woman caught in the web of relationships which throws challenge to prove her worth, individuality and identity. Adalja has gone deep into the female psyche as far as their relations with family are concern. Adalja’s female characters stand as individuals who intend to remain independent and strive for within the framework of society. Adalja handled the psyche of her female characters particularly with sympathy and understanding. While delineating the relations, the novelist has given the soft corner to women and has considered the women as the victim. Loneliness, suffering and frustration in marriage sometimes
cause disintegration and make women rebellious. It is not physical loneliness that Adalja talks of, but deeper emotional and spiritual voids.

Varsha Adalja in her novels vividly describes how woman is exploited even during the modern times by both the individuals and the society in the disruption of relationship. She also traces out a slow and gradual deviation from the stereotype of the virtuous woman to redefine virtue. Adalja condemns self-immolation and suffering, and points out that the virtue of the modern woman is to build courage to live the life full of freedom and identical. The novelist raised the modern view of women who are in search of full freedom to express their individuality and identity; and ready to fight to get rescue from suffering and injustice. She is extremely sensitive towards the grief and pain of innumerable people. An experience of traveling with a mother of mentally retarded child moves her from within and compels her to write *Khari Padelo Tahuko*.

The writer takes the material of his creation from the world and using his imagination shapes it. The basic subject of literature is life of human beings. Everyone’s life is different from that of the other. Many literary artists have tried to speak the feeling of trauma, satisfaction, happiness and peace. Varsha Adalja also includes many such aspects in her novels. Her novels are mainly centered around women who is trying to establish her own self in this world. Adalja researches her background meticulously before penning it in her writings. She used to go to ‘Sahayog Kusthyajna’ ashram for lepers established by Indira- Suresh Soni who dedicated their life to the service of lepers. She also stayed there for a while and on the basis of their life and experience she wrote a novel titled- *A*. In *A* she wrote about a girl who lived in slum of lepers, beg with her father and gets a new life in ‘Sahayog Kushyajna’ ashram.

### 4.1 HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN *KHARI PADELO TAHUKO*

In 1982, Adalja wrote *Khari Padelo Tahuko* which means- a bird which could never fly, never sing- a child. It was first published as a periodical in ‘Navneet Samarpan’ and was quite popular among the readers. In this novel, the novelist has given voice to
all the stories of mothers of mentally or physically retarded children. The novelist has focused on the progress and development of a mother named Vrunda.

While writing *Khari Padelo Tahuko* she has worked with hospitalized retarded children. There she met an aged lady named Lalitaben. Lalitaben’s sister in law gave birth to a mentally challenged baby boy in America. All the modern doctors have washed their hands stating that this boy will never be able to live a normal life and will remain retarded till his life. To make her sister in law a carefree life, Lalitaben brought Chirag with her in Mumbai. Lalitaben used to tell everyone with utmost faith and devotion that God manifests himself and one day He will sent a token of His existence. When Adalja saw him playing with a ball, she was stunned with surprise and believed that even in ‘Kaliyug’ God manifests Himself!

After approximately thirty three years, while Varsha Adalja was having her lunch in Surat’s Gujarat Sahitya Parishad, a lady came to meet her and told Adalja that her aunt Shardaben recalls and remembers her quite often. At first she thought that Shardaben might be one of the readers but she was informed that the narration given in *Khari Padelo Tahuko* under the name Lalitaben is her aunt. With an excitement Varsha Adalja enquired about Chirag. She was again astounded to learn that he is of forty years and can do all his routine works on his own. He is also earning by doing small job and is self-reliant. The doctors have shunned the door of improvement and a simple housewife has opened it by a key of unshakeable faith in God.

*Khari Padelo Tahuko* (1983) is a novel dealing with too compassionate a theme. It deals with the strained marital relationship between Vrunda and Anant. When the novel opens, we see Vrunda, the protagonist, all alone and she slips into the memory of her past and pleasant married life. She was wandering all alone near sea shore. At the time of sunset she felt that she must go home. Even though the word ‘home’ strikes her mind, it fails to arouse any emotions or infatuations in her heart. She herself was bewildered at her such strange behavior:

“अरे! आ ते केवा भात! चेढुँ केम बनी शक्ते?” (*KPT* 11).

(How strange! How could it be possible?) (Amin: 3).
She was astonished by her own feelings as she has made her home the way a bird builds its nest arranging every single twig and straw. She took toil to make her home. The home that she has built—her’s and that of Anant’s. The novelist remarks:

“ગે ઘર આમ તો સાચ નાનું અને છેક જુના મકાનમાં હતું. લાંબી ખાલીની હરબંધ ઓરડીમાંની એક ઓરડી. પછું તો ઘર. કેટલી માથા હતી થીં એની!... એ ઘર. અનાંતનું અને એનું”  

(KPT 11).

(…earlier home was a small place in an old building. A small room among the rows of rooms in the long chawl. But even then home! There was such a lot of attachment for it …that house. Anant’s and hers) (Amin 4).

The only one who is concerned for her at present at home is her maid, Santubai as her husband, Anant had gone to Delhi and her Sachin had gone to a school trip. When she comes back to her home, she ate on a huge dining table all alone. She remembers the moment when Anant first left her and went out of station. She cried a lot at that time and now she habituated herself with such situations. The narration by the novelist in the novel shows emptiness and void of feeling in Vrunda’s life. She is continuously searching for Anant's companionship but fails to attain it.

While Vrunda is emotionally attached to Anant, he is a workaholic businessman who is always interested in making money. Vrunda’s sentiments scarcely touch his heart. He is quite cautious about personal grooming. He used to instruct Vrunda to learn etiquettes and she as an obedient wife used to pay attention to all such mannerisms. But she dislikes it by heart. She does these merely to please Anant. Image conscious Anant has also hired a lady to make Vrunda learn English:
(Stella had been coming for a long time now to teach English to Vrunda. Anant had specifically instructed her that she should also teach Vrunda how to sit, speak and walk.) (Amin 7)

But when Anant is out of station, she used to evade such grooming by some pretext. All such things seem artificial to and superficial to her; she does not like to do it at all but Anant was happy with this. She even studied up to 10th standard only to please him.

Vrunda felt boredom and to evade it, thought of writing a letter to Anant. Again she slips into her bygone memories. When she wrote a letter to Anant for the first time she poured so much feelings from the bottom of her heart into a letter! And now she is baffled, what should she write to Anant:

(What could she write to Anant? So many different sentiments have disappeared leaving footprints behind. How do you name them? What is the definition of familiarity; from where did it come and where did it disappear? She did not know. So what does she write to her husband?) (Amin 11).
In a frustration, she closed the pen and all of a sudden felt nausea. Vrunda immediately understands that she is going to become a mother again. But this feeling of motherhood instead of making her happy, made her extremely sad. Adalja remarks:

“भांड़ पटकीले, चीसो पाडवानूं येणे मन धुः आँव्यं. ओह!
आटलां वर्षां पाडी एक करी प्रेमसाठ हती” (KPT 16).

(She felt like banging her head and screaming: Oh! after so many years!) (Amin 11).

Vrunda is neglected by her workaholic husband to the extent that a Vacuum has been created in their charmingly cherished relationship. Anant is over ambitious about earning money and social position. Anant climbs the success of the corporate ladder rapidly and Vrunda lagged behind him. In a due course of time she has learnt to live superficially. She lives among the people who do not have their individual identity:

“हरेक व्यक्ति पोतानी आसपास रेशम नो तार ले एक केटो बनालें जवती हती. जेवनुं केलं निशेंच अंगत ओलांबिंं आं हतं. ध्यकट मसाइंज, लोनावलांमां अंगलो, अमुंक डेशन बुटिकांनी डिमंती झाली, वटर टूर -
केवल लेबलोधी लोको ओलांबाता हतां!” (KPT 19).

(Every one was living wrapped in a cacoon made of silken thread. No one had an individual identify. White Mercedes, a bungalow in Lonavla, a Sari from a fashion boutique, world tour – people were recognised by such labels.) (Amin 16).

To keep up the pace with her husband Vrunda starts learning English and business etiquette. She accompanies Anant in his business parties and yet she felt that Anant was moving away from her. Though she attends parties and functions for the sake of
Anant, she develops an aversion towards such artificial atmosphere. Unable to cope up with this hypocritical environment, she suffocates and longs to be in contact with the real world. She recounts nostalgically her salad days when simplest things like having a roadside ‘panipuri’ with Anant, watching a third rate movie at a cheaper price, playing cards with their neighbours gave her immense happiness and she was living a blissful life with Anant. The novelist comments:

“अनें तौय अहीँया ये जे पाब्य्री हती ते हवांयधी मंडयु नहोतुं … जवन छेटयुं छलोटुल हतुं?” (KPT 21).

(And yet what she had gained here could not be got from anywhere else … Life had seemed to be overflowing!) (Amin 18).

But these things have never given happiness to Anant. For him happiness means –

“दरियानी सामे ज आपणो दार्जबलास छळेत हो. दुर्भनीय, कर अनें आ गमार झलतुं पात्यशीओने बहल्ये लेखल कलर्क लोकेआपणं पात्यशी अने मित्रो हंसो” (KPT 22).

(Our first rate flat will be just opposite the sea. Furniture, car and instead of these uncouth, unpolished neighbors, we will have royal cultured people as our neighbors and friends) (Amin 19).

The delicate thread of attachment was torn away between them because of this materialistic life style. Slowly and gradually she was moved away from the periphery of Anant’s life. Anant was so engrossed in expansion of his business that he has no time to make a single call to lonely Vrunda. He strongly believed that his absence can be filled up by giving affluent gifts! Unknowingly he drags his son, Sachin too in this current. Sachin is a replica of his father. His ambition, aspirations, choices- all were that of Anant’s. Anant firmly believed that money can buy everything. Very carefully Anant has sown the seeds of ambition in wet mud and father and son were tending
them carefully. They were climbing the rung of the ladder, forward and Vrunda lagged behind them. Father and son have their own world, different from that of Vrunda and where Vrunda’s entry was prohibited. The novelist states:

“When man няide ले ऐसा है, ना आ कहाँ बैठे ज अब ले है. पिता नी साथ पुत्र पल दूर निकली गयो है!” (KPT 46).

(But there is a fear lodged deep down in her heart – on this is something different happening. The son, like the father has travelled far away!) (Amin 57).

For quite some time a distance has been gradually created between Vrunda and her husband Anant. Anant is over ambitious about earning money and social position. One after the other he keeps on expanding his business and hardly realized that he has totally become indifferent to Vrunda and her interests.

Vrunda once again goes back to her older reminiscences and ardently recalls how she delivered the news of her first pregnancy to Anant. By learning about it, Anant looked at her vehemently and lifted her with ecstasy. But now she is unable to guess about Anant’s reaction. Anant remains too busy to his professional life and to climb the ladder of corporate success that he has no time for any personal and intimate relation even to his wife. Slowly and gradually, Vrunda too had learned to live superficial life. As Adalja states:

“आ गांजेवली जमात मा रहेवा आलेवा फळी ये फळू घीमे घीमे उपरहटावूं जावता शीली गाई केली” (KPT 19).

(Gradually she too had learnt to lead a superficial life after moving into this sky high building” (Amin 16).

Unknowingly, she compared this superficial life style with that of simpleton life of her old neighbours. Though they belong to lower middle class, there was no pomp and
hypocrisy in their behavior; there was only pure affection. But Anant could never understand this. Vrunda still like to go and visit the old place, the place where she started her married life with Anant. She felt they were quite happy in their old life style:

“अहँ क्यूँ औँहूँ छे, अनंत? आपको केटला सुलभी छी बात आ धरम्या!” (KPT 22).

(Anant, what’s wrong with this one? How happy we are in this house!) (Amin 19).

But Anant has utter hatred for such way of life. Anant has so much penchant for materialism that all such worldly things are the only source of happiness for him. Unlike Vrunda, there is no space for emotions and companionship in his life. He is merely attracted towards monetary aspects of life. Baffled Vrunda wanted to find out the moment from past where she can say that from this moment she started losing him.

Gradually she had been pushed away from the centre of Anant’s life. As if Anant and Sachin were holding hands and running far away towards a different horizon and she was dragging behind them. She worried that she will never be able to keep space with husband and son. In the initial stage of their married life, Anant took immense care to pregnant Vrunda. He has made all the possible arrangement for her rest and used to help her a lot in her day to day household work. Many a times Vrunda told him to send her to her mother’s place, but Anant very emphatically refused the proposal as village is not having as many facilities, doctor and a good clinic as that of city. Even Vrunda’s mother was very contented to see her daughter’s happy married life. But in a very short period of time Anant started climbing the ladder of worldly success and Vrunda legged behind him. She compares her present life with that of her past life and finds it is utterly empty. Adalja states:

“‘लीलोका घरामा हुँ बृहद्यां ठेम डोटिलो प्रेम, अनंतनाम
सप्तश, मौन सहयार, चेना गाछ पुलाय नो उत्केक ...सध्धु”
Vrunda strives hard to get Anant back in her life, she used to observe carefully the business etiquettes and manners, but she has always felt that Anant is moving away from her. She strives hard to win over Anant again. She was learning English from Stella. She even took lessons in speaking, sitting, rising, walking. She went to the beauty parlour regularly. She bought saris which were in fashion then from boutiques. She went to business parties with Anant and yet she fails to get Anant back in her life.

Anant was so engrossed in his business life that he has no time for his wife. Vrunda yearns for his company and love whereas Anant is totally unmoved by such sentiments. When Vrunda complains him for not even calling her for three to four days Anant plainly replies:

“तू खेलली रही एना बडलांमा तने सरस प्रेमजल आपले”
(KPT 28).
(I’ll give you a lovely present for staying all by yourself) (Amin 30).

Very casually he compensated his absence with a lavish gift and left for office. He believes that the emptiness of his absence can be filled up by material things. But for Vrunda all such monetary things are very trivial. Desperate to sustain her her life, she searches all the nooks and corners of her affluent flat whether she could find a small place or thing that echo feelings! But all in vain. She fails to communicate her inner feelings and longings for Anant to him. She strongly believed that home is not made from mere four walls, concrete and sand. It is ‘love’ that turns house into home, but
for Anant who is in a rat race to be on the top of business world, all such feelings and emotions have no place in his heart.

At this point of time, she is going to become a mother of a second child, for whose birth she is quite hesitant. The news of her pregnancy does not excite her or make her happy. Vrunda was so agitated that she does not want to give birth to the baby. As the novelist observes:

“…. अंत वनवनी छु, डॉक्टर! अने मले आ बांधक नथरी कोई तू, कोई काने नथरी कोई तू” (KPT: 23).

(I … I … am going to become a mother again doctor!
And I do not want the child) (Amin: 21).

She fails to understand why the news of her pregnancy does not make her happy. She felt that somewhere the delicate thread of feelings and emotions is broken between them and is responsible for her suffering.

But when her maid’s granddaughter comes to live for a couple of days with her she realizes that a child expands the horizon of love. Vrunda realized that it is a child that can fill the vacuum in one’s life. A child makes heart tender and powerful so that one can love everyone. Now she has made up her mind to give birth to her second child. The novelist remarks:

“घंटने एना जपने कशीक नयो अर्थ आप्यो हतो. बांधक भाव प्रेम नो विस्तार ... बांधक आते भेटे प्रेम विस्तारतो जतो जय . अने तमे बढाने प्रेम करी शकी भेटे नेकव नरम अने शक्तिशाली बनावी शकी . नानीसर्नी घंटने थमतर खरो हतो” (KPT 40).
Chandan had given a new meaning to her life. A child by itself is an expanse of love. … When a child arrives love keeps spreading and makes one’s heart compassionate and strong to enable one to love everyone. Little Chandan had wrought a miracle.

(Amin 46).

Now she welcomes this baby wholeheartedly. Anant takes care of her health. He has arranged many equipment for her rest but Vrunda yearns for his love, warmth and companionship. Even her son, Sachin is also grown up and lives life on his own rules. Vrunda feels that like Anant, Sachin too has also gone far away from her. During the last days of her pregnancy, her mother comes to stay with her. She was dumbfounded by observing an affluent bungalow of her Vrunda. Though Vrunda is happy due to her mother’s arrival to her home, she fears that her wise mother may catch the hollowness of her inner mind. Even her illiterate mother was able to understand that the couple needs to spend time together, but Anant never realised this.

Vrunda’s empty life was filled with the arrival of a new baby girl named Shyama. She adds colour to her colourless and meaningless life. Vrunda turns her entire attention to her upbringing. She felt that Shyama has integrated her scattered family life together. She hopes that this new born child will fetch her husband and her son back to her. Many a times when she was overwhelmed by the loneliness, she lifts Shyama in her lap and observes her carefully.

Meanwhile Anant has started a new business venture at Kandla and used to spend most of his time looking after it. Monetary aspect is of utmost importance for Anant, but Vrunda fails to understand this. The novelist observes:

“अंत में रमणीयता भी नहीं, जो पैसे से अनुगमन है। अंत मे तो जीवन के लिए अंत जीवन के लिए इतना करता है, कि ये नहीं होंगे। जो पैसे से जीवन है, वे जीवन को अनुमोदित करते हैं।” (KPT 49).

(She is not interested in that wealth which swallows a person entirely like an anaconda.) (Amin 62).
Unable to cope with Anant’s overambitious nature, she turns her attention to Shyama and imagines her future life with little Shyama. She kisses Shyama with deep contentment and says:

“ઘખ ખખ, ઘખ” (KPT 48).

(Shyama you have once again forged my disintegrating family life with the chain of your love)(Amin 61).

Very often when loneliness grips her in dejection, she takes Shyama in her lap and stares at her. She assumes that her loneliness will disappear in her intense love for Shyama. She imagines:

“તારી હાસ્યથી આ ઘર મધુર વાઘની જેમ અલુરી ડુક્કરી. તારી ડુક્કરી, તોકનથી આ ઘર જુંંત બની જશે” (KPT 49).

(This house will ring with your laughter like a melodious instrument. This house will become alive because of your liveliness and movement) (Amin 62).

But this happiness does not last longer. Destiny has written something different than what Vrunda has imagined. Few months after the birth of Shyama it was detected that she was mentally retarded. Vrunda was not capable to accept this shock. She yearns for Anant’s love, coddle and support at this darkest moment of her life but he is busy expanding his business and mounting the ladder of commercial accomplishment. Vrunda realizes that Anant is not there with her in this journey of life since long and deviates her entire attention in nurturing Shyama. Anant does not pay any attention to the treatment and care of Shyama. She tries to give meaning to Shyama’s meaningless life. She takes her to hospital regularly, makes her do all the exercises, and carefully executes all the instructions to make Shyama’s futile life fruitful. Vrunda was so immersed with Shyama that she could not attend Anant’s business parties now. But for Anant his status is more important than his duty towards his daughter.
For the first time in her life she realized that in her journey from a lady to beloved and from a beloved to loving wife, her husband was not with her and when he had diverted his route was also not known to her.

After recognizing Shyama’s mental disability, Vrunda deviates her life to Shyama’s upbringing. Everyday she has to take her little daughter to a hospital for different trainings. She dedicated her each evening for Shyama’s practice. Whether any friends of Sachin come home, phone calls or Anant has some work- the evening is allotted to Shyama. One such evening while she was preparing Shyama to take her to the hospital, Anant asks her to join a business party. But Vrunda does not want to waste a single moment of Shyama’s treatment and hence refused to go to the party. Anant was so agitated by her refusal that he asks:

“भारी पार्टीमां तु नही आवी रहे? शुं बोले ये तु...आज तु पार्टीमां ना आवे तो मां फेरुंतु अराव देा? अने अंडिसर्से हाथे अभमानी पत्नी होष अने मोफ अध्यात राघे?
छट डांग आउट ओड ओडीटेट” (KPT 65).

(You will not be able to come for my party? What are you saying? ...If you do not come to the party today it would reflect badly on me. And who would take care of the officers’ wives. It would be bad etiquette.) (Amin 85).

For Anant, the business and corporate parties are more important than the treatment of his own daughter. Even though he knew the fact that every single moment is precious in Shyama’s treatment, he turned a deaf ear to her needs. When Vrunda desperately needs his support, he is moving away from her by gripping himself in business parties. Unwillingly she joins the party. With artificial smile on her face, she started greeting the guests, speaking the same sentences over and over again. For a long time
willingly or unwillingly, she had been acting in such a way only to please Anant. And yet Anant is moving away from her. She introspects:

“आपने क्यों सुधी आप ज ज़बवानु हंते? आपारंभ, हेतुविहीं जववनो अर्थ शो हंतो?” (KPT 67)

(…how long will one have to live like this? What was the meaning of this tasteless, aimless life?) (Amin 87).

The mere thought of Shyama at the party makes her anxious. While Vrunda’s mind constantly lingers around her mentally retarded daughter, Shyama, Anant is absolutely untouched by it. Anant is extremely upset by Vrunda’s behavior in the party. For the first time in her life, Vrunda vent out her emotions in front of Anant. She argues:

“हूं मारी पतिनी पार्टीमा आवी हंती, मारी जन्तु प्रदर्शन करवा नहिं” (KPT 67).

(I had come for my husband’s party, not to exhibit myself) (Amin 88).

This party is an eye opening scene for Vrunda. She is now disillusioned and clearly understands that she and Anant have moved away from each other. The novelist states:

“…आफे सत्य पारणी शक्ती हंती के अनंत अनाथी जोजनो दूर नीलंकली गयो हंतो, अने अने नजक तक जय अवती केरि अे शोधी शक्ती ना हंती” (KPT 67).

(…had she not recognised the fact that he had travelled miles away from her and that she had not found a link which would take her close to him) (Amin 89).
Almost a year passed by in this manner and Shyama’s first birthday also comes. Though Anant used to arrange lavish parties in business, mentally retarded Shyama’s birthday makes no significance to him. Vrunda recalls how enthusiastically, they used to discuss about the grand way in which her marriage would take place. But at that time Shyama’s mental condition was not diagnosed. The novelist states:

“पण त्याचे श्यामाना लण्यासा फटला - सेटेंट सिम्बोल , वैल्व अने प्रतिष्णानुं जागेंनां प्रदशन करवायो अमुख्य पुसंग”
(KPT 71).

(But at that time it was Shyama’s wedding – it became an invaluable occasion for exhibiting it as a status symbol of grandeur and reputation) (Amin 93).

When Vrunda gives a bill for toys, a wheel chair and a pair of crutches that she distributed on Shyama’s birthday to other mentally challenged children, business minded Anant was aghast at the amount. He reacted negatively and merely considered it as a futile expense without any return in the future. Though they have expended money extravagantly on business parties, cocktail parties, in plane and hotel booking, costly jewelleries; this genuine effort of Vrunda was not commendable to Anant. He plainly puts this bill of Shyama’s birthday celebration in charity to avail tax benefit!

While Vrunda is deeply moved by seeing the harsh reality of hospitalized children, Anant is totally untouched by it. The novelist remarks:

“पण नागतता, बीजगता किंवा गिथेला मानव - संबंधोना जनभणी वेळा त्यांचा स्पर्श छ? अहीं जुला जुला सतर्की, वर्जनी , धर्मनी माताबोने अहे लेण मठे छ - पत्रेतून वर्धा येक ज वेळनाना तंतुली बंधावेला छ. पोतानां संताननां
He has not been touched by the pain of the oozing wounds of human relationships which result in pus and dead skin. She meets daily, mothers of all castes and communities and social levels but all of them are bound by the thread of single pain. The flowing away of one’s own child’s life meaninglessly and the straggle and suffering to bring meaning into it” (Amin 96).

In hospital, Vrunda sees an entirely different world from that of her narrow world of family. Adalja writes:

“It is as if breaking a shell she has seen the light of day for the first time. How vast this world is! She is being pushed away from the centre of her husband’s life. That thorn of pain was pricking her such a lot. And now? She
sees that this world is full of suffering. War … carnage … acute poverty, starvation … unemployment … nuclear weapons, burning cities … war-ravaged orphans… And she! She was lamenting the loss of everything while living in her small, safe and comfortable world) (Amin 97).

In the hospital she meets Lalitaben who comes to the hospital to treat her sister in law’s disabled son, Chirag. Vrunda’s meeting with Lalitaben is a turning point in her life. Vrunda observes that Lalitaben is not wasting a single moment in treating Chirag. Her selfless dedication and devotion to God had resulted in Chirag’s physique and mental outlook. The author writes:

“जे यमंडार विश्वानन्त न करी शक्यु ते यमंडार अभम्ना प्रेमी करी बतात्यो” (KPT 70).

(The miracle which science couldn’t perform, her love has) (Amin 93).

On Lalitaben’s advice Vrunda starts narrating stories to Shyama by considering her as a normal child. Vrunda has now made Shyama the whole purpose of her life. Lalitaben continuously gives her courage and from that she gets energy. A simpleton housewife has shown her the path of love and she starts walking on this path by keeping an utmost faith in it.

In the hospital she met children with numerous disabilities like polio, cerebral palsy etc. This atmosphere throws new light on an entirely different facet of love which Vrunda had been looking for in her life but fails to get it. Here she sees the true embodiment of selfless, devotional and dedicated love for fellow human beings. This world of hospital is entirely different and unique from the world she lived in. The corporate culture of Anant is totally made up of only pomp, hypocrisy and plastic smiles. There is no concern for the fellow beings but here in the hospital she sees and feels the true and unconditional love for fellow human beings. Adalja observes:
She is now able to see different facets of love. The novelist states:

“प्रेम तेरे स्वरूप पुकारे चॆरि है (KPT 71).
(Love manifests itself in so many ways!) (Amin 93).

Like a diamond, how many facets does love have! Its manifestation in many forms is like the self-existent Shivling … It is part of the lustrous light of divinity itself) (Amin 97).

Vrunda now dedicates her whole attention to Shyama’s upbringing. She has carved Lalitaben’s advice in her heart. She continuously talks to Shyama and tries to teach her something or the other by showing colourful books and toys. The days roll by in this manner. Days and months have passed by in making Shyama learn a simple routine activity but Vrunda is contended with it. The distance between the husband and wife has become so large that Anant has started sleeping in another room. Gradually his clothes and other belongings have been shifted over there. Sometimes she doesn’t meet Anant during the whole day despite living under the same roof. She is unaware about what time he comes back home. The bridge between them was severed and she has accepted it without any complaint.

One day Anant asks her to go to Kandla with him but Vrunda firmly refused it by stating genuine reason of Shyama’s treatment. The couple had a fierce argument with each other and ultimately Vrunda realizes:

“धरतीकपडी अभि वे शास्त्रीय महानालो महेल जमीनदीलेंत थांब
gahon hata. ane असा वे ती पुढे थांब गयं हंतुं अनाँत
Her illusory palace had collapsed as if by an earthquake. And suddenly it became clear to her that Anant had gone too far away. She had stagnated because of Shyama. And now she would not be able to run after Anant and Sachin. This was a self-evident truth and lie every truth it was harsh) (Amin 105).

But Vrunda’s self-effacing efforts were realized by others. Stella once told her that her devotion and faith alone will make Shyama wear anklets. And on that day Shyama learned to turn on her back on her own. Vrunda’s eyes were moist with tears of happiness. Now she gains strength and composure. Adalja writes:

“She no longer experienced the grief of loneliness or helplessness. God stood by her. The Almighty had sent her a small token of His existence; had made her conscious that He was always with her. This was the voice of consent from within) (Amin 107).
All of a sudden she earnestly wishes to meet her mother, and on the very same day she receives a post card intimating her mother’s death. She wrote a small letter to Sachin and prepared to leave for her native place, leaving all memories behind. She has now no regret for Shyama’s disabilities. She strives hard to make her true human. She informs her friend, Rama in a letter that though she is in Anant’s life yet separated from him. She writes:

“…अत्यंत सुस्वस् रीते अमे ओकबीजाही क्षारे दूर थाता गाया , अे जाती नयेकी. लौटिक रीते अे क पढी। अेक सक्रणातुं पविशिंयू अे वर्त्ता गाया . मारी पासे श्यामा हती. हा. मारी नानी दीकी मानसिकरीते पशात छे. अने वाया नयेकी, गति नयेकी; आधी अन्तर्तनी गति साधी हुं क्रम म न मिलायीय शकी ....हाय पर कोगी गोवेली छक्की आंगणी नी जें हुं अन्तर्तना संसारमां ज छुं, छतां देवाणी , अलग .”

(KPT 86).

(…we drifted apart very quietly. Materially, he continued to climb steps of success. I had Shyama. Yes, my little girl is retarded. She doesn’t have speech and movement. Because of this I couldn’t keep pace with Anant’s success...I am still part of Anant’s life like a sixth finger on a plam, yet separate, distant.” (Amin 116-116).

Vrunda makes her life- mission to give her best in bringing her daughter up. She makes Shyama her sole purpose of life and this gives meaning to her own desolate life. She attains fulfillment in her motherhood. She now understands Dr Shrivasatav’s words that Vrunda’s love will give new life to Shyama and with this she too will get a new life. Vrunda has imagined that Shyama will integrate her disintegrated family life. She wonders is it true in this sense?
This novel is also a story of search for identity, dignity and for love. The novel brings out from the deepest recesses of woman’s heart, her fulfillment in being a mother to a mentally challenged daughter, while the father remained totally indifferent to both. Vrunda with all her motherly love and dedication make it her life mission to give her best in bringing her up. The crux of the novel lies in this, since she had decided to give birth to this child with a wish that the child will fill up the gaps created in her lonely life which though in a different sense it does. Shyama becomes her sole purpose of life.

The novel is about marital disharmony and modern man’s desire for money and power. This is a story of Anant who is entirely a self-made person and for whom materialistic pleasure and power is everything, his bright and over ambitious son, Sachin is an exact replica of his father and Vrunda who wants to live a different life than this. For Vrunda, the true happiness lies in love and contended life. Whereas Anant is always busy expanding his horizon of business. This mental contrariness is the base of marital disharmony. Apart from that their daughter, Shyama’s mental disability enlarges this marital conflict.

4.2 HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN ANSAAR


“દ્વારા ઉભા નવલકથાઓમાં પોતાનો મૌલિક અવાજ
ગુજરાતી પ્રજન સંમેલનયો છે. તેમને સંબેદનશીલતાની
અંદાજના કરી છે. ‘અંબાઝામાં ફેનબીય સાહિત્ય અંબાજેમિનો”
In her novels, Varshaben has made Gujarati people heard her most fundamental voice. She has worshipped sensitivity. *Ansaar* was aptly conferred Central Sahitya Academy Award.

The novel also got Sanat Kumari Award. Raghuveer Chaudhary remarks:

> "अण्सार मां भाषानी प्रवाहिता अने साहित्यिक छांट छे. वर्षाय्कोनी मानवतावाद सुधारणी संपादक परधी सरकी ना जता आधाल आपी विचार करवा पेरे छे" (Chaudhari 2013, outside back cover).

(There is a lucidity in language and a touch of literature in *Ansaar*. Varshaben’s humanism gives shock and provokes thoughts by not slipping away from the surface of refinement).

According to Madhusudan Parekh:

> "अण्सार नवलकथा समाजना तमाम वर्गोंनी वेतनाले धक्की मारी तेमने जगृत घोषणेप्रेरे छे" (Parekh, 2013 Outside back cover).

(The novel *Ansaar* shakes the consciousness of all classes of the society and invokes them to awake).

Ila Arab Mehta notes:
When Adalja was told by ‘Shram Mandir’ to write something about leprosy, she started researching and collecting information about leprosy, true incidents, characters and real life experiences. As a writer she wanted to peep inside the psyche of lepers. She observes:

“…माझ्याविरुद्धांत बऱ्याच ज व्याविस्तारांतील एक रक्तपित ज आपल्या रोगाने, जेव्हा त्यांच्या क्रुद्धाने अनेक सेवानून पात्र बनावताने बद्दले विचार असल्यानं पात्र बनेचे हे. भूल स्वाजनी याचाची करवाने बद्दले झाडी गेल्या वस्त्रांची जम देण्याची इक्की देते हे.” (A Preface).

(...Among all the diseases that cling human beings, leprosy is the only disease where a patient becomes entitled for hatred and detestation than compassion and service. Their very own relatives throw them away as a torn cloth).

Leprosy is equated with an ‘untouchable’ status and it often persists long after individuals with leprosy have been cured of the disease. And thus creates lifelong
prospects of eviction, loss of employment, and ostracism from family and social networks. Despite effective treatment and education efforts, leprosy stigma continues to be problematic in endemic developing countries like India. As deformity was considered divine punishment, stigma was associated with it.

The novel deals with the lepers who were ostracised and prevented from accessing community resources. As a result of stigma and discrimination they experience a loss of self esteem and dignity and feel fear, shame, hopelessness and guilt. Adalja shows the painful condition of such people who were outcast, excluded and uprooted from the countryside. Varsha Adalja has stayed among those people who were rejected by their own family members. She has taken personal interest in their life, observed their lifestyle closely and studied the literature related to them in detail. Leprosy, an infectious disease, is a highly stigmatized disease. It directly affects patients’ physical, psychological, social and economical well-being. With the oozing pus and blood in the wound, the human relationships also ooze away. This mental trauma is deeper than the physical pain. Without any crime, they were thrown away by their own relatives and then they shut the door of their house and heart forever. The novelist has met such people who had been living in ‘Shram Mandir’ for over twenty years. Adajla is shaken from within after listening their predicament.

As Mother Teresa observed:

“The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love” (<www.goodread.com>).

The central character of the novel, Rupa is a daughter in law of a very affluent and reputed family that include- her Doctor husband- Shailesh, Vanalataben- mother in law, brother in law- Anup and son- Yash. She was blessed with all the worldly happiness. She has a loving husband. Her mother in law is a known social worker. Rupa is an orphan child. She was brought up by her brother and sister in law and
hence family is of utmost importance to her. When she met Shaaish she was quit contended with his family. The novelist observes:

“येनी आसपास सुननी एक गह जललाई गयो हलो. येमां अं नसिकत हली.” (A 30).

(A castle of happiness was built around her. she was safe there).

Rupa is an idol of compassion. She is sentimental, meek, delicate and docile. Rupa is so compassionate that she easily gets disturbed by other’s pain. Even a cough of an unknown person bothers her and she is relaxed only after giving some medicine.

Whereas her mother in law, Vanalataben is an embodiment of pomp and hypocrisy. Being an active social worker, she used to go to Old-age Home and orphanage for charity. But unlike Rupa, she is never actually moved by the adverse conditions of such people. When she forcefully tells Rupa to join her at such charity program at Old age home, Rupa replies:

“ना मम्मी. तमने अंधर छे के ते देवी पोधी छुँ! माराठी कोहेंयु दुःख जोड़वाव्ह नही” (A 19).

(No mymmy, you know how tender am I! I cannot tolerate anyone’s grief).

Vanalataben too says:

“भारी रुपा सावळोली पारेवा जेवीः कर्ज वात्तमां कुछा ठाके” (A 19).

(My Rupa is as innocent as a pigeon. She gets frightened at a simple matter).
In an Old age home Vanalataben had promised a lady to write a letter to her son. When Rupa asks her how she would write a letter when she does not understand the language of that lady, she remarks:

“આ સીયાની મેકરતા, પોતાની સ્વભાવમી તરફરખાદાની વેરના એ અધ્યં શું લાભખી જ અથવી સાક્ષી છે?” (A 19)

(Is language the only medium to learn the loneliness and pain of abandonment from their own relatives?)

But this is only on a superficial level as Vanalataben is actually not moved by the other’s sentiments. On the contrary her daughter in law, Rupa has the capability to understand pain and trauma of other people:

“તો શું એ સીયાને બાત નિર્નીત શીખવા શીખવાની જ જુદી છે?
જી ની નથી? બુક્ક ની નથી? તમને બનાર છે એ..એ... ભાઈ
પાસે કેટેકે વસ્તુઓ હતા. પછી એ પોતાનું કેટે કાપું
જોઈ હતું. પોતાનું સ્વમન. પોતાનું ઘર.” (A 20).

(Do those women need mere inanimate thing? Not love? Not Warmth? Do you know that…that… lady has so many things. But she yearned for her own person. Her own relative. Her own home.)

This becomes an irony of her own life as she was not aware that this statement is going to fit in her own life.

Gradually, an enemy called- leprosy enters in her life. On the other hand, her brother in law, Anup leaves home to marry Maria, a Christian girl against the wishes of family members. One by one, the wall of her happy life shatters. Vanalataaben considered her like daughter, but the same Vanalataben becomes stonehearted and desperate to abandon Rupa from her own home as soon as she learns about Rupa’s disease of leprosy. She even intimates Shailesh that her presence is no more needed in
the home. Rupa was left with no other alternative than to leave her home. Alike truth of disease, truth of hypocrisy is also revealed here. Leprosy snatched away her son, her motherhood from her. Though Rupa’s husband is a doctor she is left to herself without the help and support of her family to manage her life.

Though leprosy can be cured, Vanalataben is not ready to keep Rupa at home. She believes:

“Aa to च्छाई नो शाप छे. रुपा मास धरमां नहि शैलिप.” (A 54).
(This is God’s curse. I don’t want Rupa in my home, Shailesh).

When Shailesh tries to convince her that she used to serve other people and how could she abandon Rupa from her home, she simply replies:

“Aa ऑनु पाप छे. ये आपाणां संपर्कांतून नंधी समजचो?” (A 55).
(This is her sin. It does not touch us, do you understand?).

This is so unpardonable for Vanalataben that she has taken Rupa’s one year old son, Yash away from her. When Rupa learns about her disease she asks poignantly:

“…तें पत्नी तरीके, डॉक्टर तरीके समजवो के मने रक्तपित क्ये, अभमां धुं धुं कूट क्ये? मने धुं काम कटूकत करो क्ये? …
कुं केवळ साप होई अने तमाने लोकेने इंते तेवानी होई अभम मने लाक्षणे मारी नामवानी? मारु घर. मारी टिकाऊ, मारु समेत जवन लूंटी तेवानी!” (A 60).
… You as a husband, as a doctor make me understand that if I have leprosy, what should I do? Why are you deserting me?… Kill me with a stick as if I am a poisonous snake and going to bite you? Snatch my home, my son, my entire life?).

Desperate to save her existence and life, she pleads Shailesh not to abandon her. She pleads:

“मने काबी ना मुक्तो शैलेष, हुं प्यां ज़र्ज़े? हुं केम ज़ैवे? तमारा धरमा जेक नेनी मुझो आपी बी तो हुं युष्माप मों संताकीने पछी रहैः, मारा दीकरानु मों तो जोही शुं. हुं अहीथी क्यांय नही जाई शैलेष, क्यांय नही जाई” (A 61).

(Don’t abandon me Shailesh. How would I live? Give me a corner in your home and I will lie there silently by hiding my face, at least I can see my son’s face. I will not go anywhere Shailsh, I will not go anywhere).

But on his mother’s indication, Shailesh has already made arrangements to send Rupa to a leprosy hospital. Despite her many requests and pleas, Rupa was sent to the hospital. At this point of time she raises questions to her husband:

“शैलेष, तमाने रोज थयो हौल ने हुं तमाने आम छीकीने जत तो तमे श्यू करत? (A 71).

(Shailesh, what will you have done, had you got affected by this disease and I abandon you?).

But Shailesh has no answer to Rupa’s question. Without uttering a single word, he climbed down stairs. Instead of standing by the side of his wife at this critical situation, he merely gives hollow consolations to Rupa that she will get well soon and
he will come to meet her in the hospital. Though by heart he too knows that nothing from these promises are going to become true.

Shailesh drops her in a distant Matrushri Kashiba Leprosy Hospital of Vadodara. Stunned by hospital’s atmosphere, she recalls her husband, her son continuously. Her heart churns and yearns for her family, instead the hospitalized patients become her family members. Rupa felt that she is flung to a different world by a giant stroke. Shocked by the atmosphere of the hospital, she faints and at night dreams and murmurs. In the hospital she dreams of huge castles, colourful mountains and golden throne studded with diamonds. She reveries the pronunciation of her arrival:

“રૂપારાજી પાણે છે” (A 75).

(Queen Rupa is arriving).

This dream is also very symbolic as up to now she has lived her life like a queen and now she is flung in a world that is full of disgusting scenes and people, suffering from leprosy, with their disfigured body and eaten away nose. Here she sees the other side of the truth by listening the stories of deep wounds in heart and the stinking smell of rotten relationships. And yet she expects earnestly that her family members will come to take her back to her beautiful home when her disease will be healed.

The atmosphere of the hospital makes her mentally disturb to an extent that once docile, tender and gentle Rupa indulges into verbal and physical dispute with other patients. She shouts, screams and abuses others on and off and loses her mental balance. She now realises the dark reality of her life that she is all alone in this world. The everyday experiences in the hospital shakes her from within. The other incidents like death of a young boy Chhagan, suicide of Lalita etc forces her to escape from the hospital. Suffocated by the atmosphere of hospital, one day she carefully runs away from there only to learn the news of her own death. When she goes home she finds that her own family members have declared her dead and had moved to Mumbai.

She leaves the place and stays in a hotel named Krusna Guesthouse with a new name- Kusum. She feels at ease here. But that too is for a short while. In a hotel she becomes a victim of malafide intentions of Piramji. Here she experiences the wicked sight of people. She was saved from the vulgarities of evil Piramji. In a short period of time
her disease was revealed to other people and was once again sent to a leprosy hospital with the help of an Inspector. There she receives love and warmth from humane like Manudada and Jesika. In the hospital she meets sister Jesica who has utter faith in God. Rupa’s life is so disillusioned that she has now no faith in God. She is successful in running away from the hospital only to be sent to a new hospital! In her unconsciousness she continuously shouts, screams and tries to elope from the place. Over and over again she dreams of a dark room having no air and light. She feels that she is caged there and she merely rambles from one room to the second, from second to third endlessly. The novelist very skilfully uses this dream to portray Rupa’s mental condition after leprosy. She longs to get free from it but is never able to do so. The novelist writes:

"No, no, she will never be relieved from this prison. The minute germs of leprosy have entered in the body and have created a strong web. This horrible disease, fear, uncertainty, shadows, remembrance of past and trauma of present, scull of death…. These all are the bricks of jail. Ruthless. Powerful. There is no last door of these rooms coming one by one)." (A 210).
Because of the trickery in the hospital she again runs away from there and adopts her name as Savitri. Here again her identity is changed. She acquires a new name- Savitri. She travels in a train for long and ultimately arrives to Vadodara- a place where she once lived as a queen and now she is on the verge of becoming a beggar. By the mercy of Tyagrajan who is also a leper, she was taken to a slum area of lepers. Gradually she feels at home there.

In this slum area she meets a little girl named Meera. Meera gives meaning to her meaningless life. Rupa’s motherhood is satisfied in her. She makes it her life mission to live for the sake of this little girl’s upbringing. She is now determined to live. The novelist remarks:

“When she has lost everything, this little crystal is left with her… She will live, definitely live, will live for her Meera and will give life to her.” (A 239).

In this slum, Rupa gets new life. With the support of volunteers and health workers, all the lepers of slum got the place to live in ‘Shram Mandir’. When these lepers were being taken to ‘Shram Mandir’ in a bus, the writer observes it not as a travelling but a journey- a journey of discovery of new life. Discovery of one’s own self.

Rupa here sees different relationships. On the other hand there are people like Madhubhai, Rameshbhai et al who are dedicated his life to serve the downtrodden people of the society. They formed Shram Mandir, to serve the people suffering from leprosy.

Suffering from a dreadful disease, they were discriminated against and driven out of the society, which often lead to death due to lack of treatment. Shram Mandir strives to instil a sense of dignity and pride among its inhabitants by building up their self-
worth. There are people who serve these lepers with love and care, without a slightest feeling of disgust towards them, with whom there is no blood relationships. She wonders which relationship is true - that of love or that of blood? When everyone is happy with this change, Rupa’s mind again gets engaged in a deep pain and trauma. She continuously searches to find the answers to her questions. She is not able to understand why God has created such pain and loneliness on this earth. She ponders:

“If God is there across this gigantic blue Ghumat, why am I not getting his indication? A little token, inkling that God is still there... Why such pain on this earth? Why such diseases? Why is this God’s curse on humanity? Why?”

But slowly all her bitterness towards life and God starts effacing and she sees the other side of God’s creation. During a conversation with Sudhaben she learns:

“These pains and traumas on this earth is the sign of God’s presence” (A 261).

By seeing such pains, the inner consciousness of people gets awakened. This pain is created to awaken the humanity in human beings, to stir the consciousness. Those who got such woe are the people who were offered in this sacrifice as a fuel. For the betterment of entire humanity, some people were sacrificed. Several true workers
created an entire ‘Shram Mandir’. An entire family of people striving to live in full bloom and happiness emerges. Is it a sign of spring? This statement frames the conclusion of the novel. Rupa melts by hearing plights of new patients. Her beliefs, previous understanding etc all shatters and she was liberated from the blood ties. Her heart weaves with love in a vast house given by God.

She felt:

“अँगेज़ ऊपर मीट मांडी. घेना नाना हड़थमां अनंत आकाश समाँँ अभुँ. ताराओनी उत्सजना लिपिमां हरिना हस्ताक्षरनी आलेख हती। श्रुं अल घेना अस्तित्वना अर्थनी शोध हती!” (A 261).

(She looked up. In her little heart infinite sky is encompassed. In a bright inscription of stars there is a graph of God’s signature. Is this the search of the meaning of her existence?)

At this moment she feels that she is relieved from the shackles of endless dark rooms that appear in her dream frequently.

Rupa gets the answers of all her questions at the end of the novel. At the end of the novel, Anup, Maria and Yash enters as guests visiting Shram Mandir. She receives the new of death of her husband and her mother in law. Anup wishes to take her to Mumbai with him but for Rupa happiness lies in serving at Shram Mandir. She gives Meera’s hand to Yash and her painful journey end with the feeling of ‘Vasudheiv Kutumbkam’ (The World is a Family). All her pains end through Shram Mandir and she decides to spent rest of her life serving lepers.

The novel delineates different human relationships. On one side there are relatives who have turned their back after knowing the leprosy and have never come to see the conditions of their dear ones. And on the other hand, there are people who without any blood relationships apply ointment to the open wound of lepers without any
aversion and repugnance. They give support to those with whom they have no blood relationship. They attempt to instil life in such lepers with love, humanity and gratification. Through the novel, Adalja raises a question in the mind of the reader— which relationship is true? That of love or that of blood?

The novelist remarks that merely by taking birth as a human does not make one human. By work and deed one has to prove his humanity. Truly being human itself is a big deal! In this novel, Varsha Adalja has tried to observe and understand human from different angels.

The novel conveys a message to sick humanity. As Narayan Desai believes:

“अंधेरे पाठकों को अर्थ में यह पत्ता लगाएँ.. गर्भ में आती हुई जीवन प्रसंगि के अनेक प्रश्नों का उत्तर देने, पति की आश्वासन ना छोड़ने और क्रियाशक्ति संकेत करने के”
(Desai, 2013 preface).
(The novel is a message to sick humanity...It has a pious message not to shed away faith in any arduous situation in life and the One who gives life).

4.3 HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN MARE PAN EK GHAR HOY

*Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy* (1971) deals with the story of two sisters and their troubles in life. The novelist has given a delicate divergent to a strong blood relationship. Leena, the elder sister is the sole bread earner and the sole support of her family. and Surekha is younger to Leena and is a schizophrenic patient. Leena has to give up her dreams, higher education and aspirations and even her love for the sake of her schizophrenic sister. Leena even shoulders all the responsibilities of the household due to the death of her mother and paralysis attack on her father. Surekha gets married to Anupam, a colleague of Leena whom she loved very much. She once again sacrifices for her sister. The novel unveiled the inner landscape of Leena’s mind and heart. At the end
of the novel, Surekha was ultimately sent to an asylum and Anupam’s hint to Leena to allow him and Apurva his son to live with her.

This is one of Adalja’s favourite novels; while writing this novel she feels oneness with the character of Lena. Dhirubahen Patel published it in ‘Sudha’ periodically and was well acclaimed by the readers. This was her very first experience with the periodical publication of her novels as a writer. When it was published in a book, as a novel, it got Gujarat Sahitya Parishad’s ‘Bhagini Nivedita’ award inspired by Shri Mota. It was telecasted in five parts as Teleplay on Mumbai Doordarshan and was translated in Hindi and English languages. It was then telecasted as a TV Serial in thirteen parts on Ahmedabad Doordarshan and received the award for best script. From this a Gujarati film titled- ‘Moti Veraya Chowkma’ was made. This film got the prize of best script from The Gujarat Samachar. In the preface Adalja writes:

“सच्छ ने है कृति अभ. ते है कृति कुलपिया पाण बने अखुब
क्या रहे ज हवन. ये रीते आ कृति वाज्यशाली नीती तेनो
मने आलंते छो” (MGH Preface).

(Scarcely has it happened that the writing that the author likes becomes popular as well. In this sense I feel delighted that this novel is a fortunate one).

Economical factor also plays a significant role in familial relationship. In modern time each and everything is related to money and hence all the matters of family or society revolves around money/economy. Every relation has money at its center. Relations are ruled by the economical status. This economic conditions is an important factor in this novel.

The novel shows a delicate relationship of to siblings torn between love and hatred. Leena assumed that she has love and compassion for her Schizophrenic younger sister but she realized that this love had already dried up long ago, what has remained is only hatred. And suddenly her life changes. A well known philosopher Jean Paul Sartre says in his drama- No Exit:

“Hell is other people” (Sartre 34).
In this narrow confined world, when the aspiration for happiness is collided with other’s aspiration for happiness, from this struggle hell takes its birth. But open limitless desire lies in heart of narrow human beings. He cannot lie there permanently in the mud of hatred. He himself has to come out from this hatred and the guilt complex from it and has to open the window of heven to search the luminous and divine halo of love.

On the surface it may appear that Adalja’s *Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy* deals with a love triangle among two sisters - Leena and Surekha and Anupam. But Adalja here does not depict the love-triangle plot in a typical manner. The distinctive feature of this novel is that the novelist has created the love triangle in a peculiar condition and then depicted the actions and attitudes of the characters concerned especially Leena. It is this insight and dexterity that renders this novel its distinctive feature.

On the superficial level, the struggle is between Leena and Surekha the two sisters, but on deeper level the struggle is between the two selves of Leena herself. She is slit into duality one that is a self-sacrificing sister, and other pining for the fulfilment of self-aspirations. From her very childhood Surekha was a schizophrenic patient. The doctor advised to fulfil her each and every desire as that will keep her mental state cool and calm. This leads to parent's soft feelings for Surekha. Gradually this need becomes Surekha’s habit and she becomes very demanding and stubborn. Leena as an elder sister is all the time asked to sacrifice either her own time, or parents love and care for her younger sister. Unkonwingly sibling rivalry is instilled in the mind of Leena. Surekha was three years younger than Leena. She was delicate and shapely. Leena, on the other hand, was tall, dark, frank and courageous. Leena is a cultured girl with extreme tolerance power. She shoulders all the responsibilities of her family members. She is a thoughtful and sensitive girl. When the novel opens the reader comes across a scene of Surekha’s schizophrenic attack due to her wish to join a party with Leena. Leena was so agitated by Surekha’s behaviour and her constant compromise with her that when her father tries to make her understand the situation she reacts:

“ना ना ना व्यारेग नाही, हेवेयी, आज्ञाभूत सुरूङ्ख्याने मारे। कश्युं जरूर नाही कुंडे।” (*MGH 3*)
(No, no, never! From now on, right from today, I won’t give up anything else for Surekha!) (Amin 121).

Many a times Leena felt that:

“The house rotated speedily on an axis called Surekha. It moved so fast that her head spun and she wanted to scream out loudly and tell everybody: ‘No’ no, no. Enough. I’m not going to give anything up for Surekha. I’m also a human being. I also have the right to live my life the way I want to) (Amin 137).

Another important aspect of this novel is the attitude of Leena’s parents. It is obvious enough that parents always love their weaker child more. And hence they always first think for Surekha and thereafter Leena. To make this situation poignant, the novelist has narrated a middle class family. So Leena’s requirements are cutback to satisfy Surekha’s demands. In this, one more thing is added and that is doctor’s recommendation to keep Surekha happy in every condition. This recommendation has become the foremost important thing in the house. In such condition Leena felt the contradictory feelings of love, sympathy and hatred all together and gets irritated by her condition.

Her parents’ partial behaviour is responsible for Leena’s split personality. Leena had to sacrifice her education and ambition for Surekha. She was a brilliant and ambitious student dreaming to take science stream and become a doctor. But here economic factor becomes a hurdle in Leena’s life as her parents have to spend more on
Surekha's ailment and special education at home. Because of this, they are unable to pay fees for Leena's coaching classes. For the first time she demands money for her coaching classes and she has been denied. This denial to her and special tutor for Surekha at home saw the seed of sibling rivalry in her. Yet throughout the novel she experiences tug of war between her two selves. She indirectly becomes the victim at the hands of her own parents. The economic factor in this case plays greater role in depriving Leena of accomplishing her goal. Surekha is a schizophrenic patient from early childhood. The doctor has advised to satisfy her each and every desire to keep her mind calm. The economic condition of the parents is middle class and so at the cost of Leena’s ambition and aspirations, Surekha's desires are fulfilled. Every now and then Leena is made the target of sacrifice which stings her bitterly. Leena says:

“સ્વાગ, લોગો, કુછ અલકાલો એ અશ્ચા શબ્દો દુષ્ટતિ
ઘરેલૂની ચૂમ કેટલાક જ વજારતી સારી લાગે છે, રીજ નથી”

(MGH 59).

(Words like renunciation, duty and sacrifice are like expensive jewellery, good for occasional use, not every day) (Amin 171).

She wishes to choose a vocation in the outside world as well as fill her inner world with loving husband and protecting house. Like Murty, in Adalja too house becomes a continuous metaphor defined as women's 'natural' territory. This domain has fears from other impersonal factors. In the study of Leena's struggle with self and surrounding to occupy space for herself and realization of her utopia, though house which is inhabited by the family is a private domain, it cannot remain away from public impositions. Friedan's description of the entrapment of locale doesn't quite give women the credit of understanding their situation.

The home therefore, is the location built up around women, a location of their own design. This space is a crucial feature of women's existence.
Leena is not able to pursue higher education in science stream as she got lesser marks in 12\textsuperscript{th} standard. With bitter heart she got admission in Arts stream. But destiny has written something else for her. But her misfortune did not allow her to acquire the degree. She is not able to complete even her graduation and leaves it for the sake of her family. Leena’s mother died shoudering all the responsibilities to Leena and her father had an attack of paralysis. Because of such reasons, Leena had to leave her studies. Ultimately she left the graduation course in the middle and started searching for a job for her and her family’s survival. and finally, she bid farewell to college and left her studies. With that, her only link to the outside world was severed. She was all alone; she has no friends. All her dreams of vocation are crushed when she has to take up a job as a typist after her father becomes paralytic.

Later when she is economically self-reliant she buys things of her choice for the house and the family which creates the paradox. She tries to give a pattern to her house, decorate it with artistic flower vase, showpiece etc. which are broken by her sister Surekha during her mental disorder. Leena began to build a beautiful dream mansion; she arranged imaginary bricks one by one just as a mason does – slowly, brick by brick. She used to think:

“\[ \text{“मारे पुल ओएक घर होय, ज मात्र मारे ज होय. पोटिंडं. अनुपम... अनुपम मारे पति होय अने मारु ओएक बांक होय” (MGH 37)} \]

‘I too will have a house, one that is my own, my very own house. Anupam...Anupam will be my husband and I will have his child.’ (Amin 152).

Surekha always remain at the centre of her family due to adjectives like-‘Little’, ‘poor’, ‘sick’. There was no open discussion about her in the family. But an un-stated pact was formed between Leena’s parents. All Surekha’s wishes used to be fulfilled and in order to do so, everybody had to give up their desires. Her parents followed their pact so blindly that perhaps without meaning to, they even expected Leena to do the same. Once while Leena was reading late at night, she heard a conversation
between her parents regarding satisfying Surekha’s needs even at the cost of Leena’s aspirations. Leena had no inkling that this ordinary conversation would one day devour her like a python and destroy her existence completely. It is observed that a mother loves her weaker child more. This has proved true in this case as well.

Looking after the small and great needs of Surekha also befalls on her since the death of her mother. Perhaps the novelist seems to have plotted such state of her parents for their being aware of the discrimination done to Leena. Her father even confesses in the end that by overprotecting and over caring Surekha, they had been partial to Leena. Leena suffers throughout her life due to her father's erroneous decision for which he feels guilty, when it is too late. After Surekha's marriage and departure from this house, Leena's father in state of intense grief and guilt tells Leena that:

“तु जाणौ थे लीना, मने मात कक्ष सम्भव करे थे. आ बघा माने हु म जयाबदल हु... ओबा तो हेटलाय पूछतिए अत्यारे मारी नजर सामे जोखिमक स्रोत बनी जाय थे, जयारे जोड़ अने भाट मीरा वीरा बरेंनी वास्तु तो हीक पण अमे अरमानी पण अमे जूठवी लीथा थे.” (MGH 69)

(Do you know Leena, my conscience has constantly been pricking me? I’m responsible for all of this...so many incidents from the past suddenly clearly reveal that for the sake of one sister, we have snatched from the other not only material things, but also her dreams) (Amin 179)

Such confession and regrets fails to nullify the years’ long inner turmoil that Leena endured. She now becomes conscious about this things and wears the mask of hypocrisy to meet the expectations of the family and society. Life long she experienced the two pulls inside her one that was ideal but superficial and the other that was real but ruthlessly uncovered. As Mehta remarks:
Leena's emotions blow hot and cold between her two split selves one that ever loves her sister Surekha and is gentle and compassionate to her and the other that hates her, and swears her for being a burden on her. She feels that:

“Surekh were stuck to her life like a leech that would not be pulled off until she had sucked her fill of Leena’s blood” (Amin 125).

She is so agitated by such things that she disliked all those who praised her for efficiently bearing the burden of the family; the schizophrenic sister and paralytic father. Her relatives and neighbours compared her capacity with that of an eagle ‘stretching its wings she has sheltered the whole house’. Growing up she had not realized from which moment onwards she had started hating her sister Surekha. In the preface to the novel Kundanika Kapadia writes:

“पुरे पूरे लोही पी लोधा विना चे नही बिंडे” (MGH 29).

“She felt...” (Kapadia preface).
(At one moment whom she hates the other moment she loves. She'll sacrifice his/her life for the one against whom she wishes to fight).

Leena accepts her destiny in playing the role of bread earner and supporter of the family at the cost of her self development. It was for her schizophrenic sister and paralytic father that she had to accept a job of a typist which affected her talent and growth. So out of the two dreams one of vocation and other of house i.e. occupying space, being rooted, the first one is shattered by her parents chiefly father.

Because of her job Leena’s social responsibilities doubled. Accidentally she comes in contact with Anupam by her friend Ramila. Anupam is a cheerful and talkative man. She felt he is the one who could lift the burden from her shoulder, one, who like a prince, had awakened her soul, from deep slumber. And Leena falls in love with him but was never able to communicate her feelings to Anupam. She thinks of building relationship with him. But before Anupam and Leena’s acquaintance turn into love, Anupam was inclined towards Surekha. This is the pinnacle of Leena’s tolerance and hard luck. The entire direction of the novel is changed.

When she sees that her love is snatched away from her, she fights with Surekha. But Surekha defeats her by stating:

“मारी पुष्प नवलापं मोती छ। भे अक्षणं षष्ठकं लिंग
नष्ठी के वरणा बनीले ढीली जय। भे मने नहीं परदेस तो य
tमने तो भे नहीं ज परदेस, कारणके अनुपम मारी छ। मारी
ज रहेसी। भे मने ताड़े छ। मने -सुरेराने, तमने -लीनाने
नघी” (MGH 62).

(My love is a precious pearl. It’s not a shiny dewdrop that will evaporate… and doesn’t marry me, even then he’ll not marry you because he is mine and he’ll remain
mine. He loves me, only me – Surekha – not you, Leena” (Amin 173).

And after hearing this she herself gets Surekha married to Anupam and lives her life without any expectation of happiness. To give a happy ending to Leena’s life and the novel, the novelist shows two important things. Firstly, Surekha has hid her disease from Anupam and secondly, she gave birth to Apurva.

Leena nurtures Apurva like a mother. Suddenly, one day Surekha’s disease reappears after a prolong period due to Apurva’s crying. Surekha becomes frenetic because of her guilt complex that she has cheated Anupam. Ultimately, she was moved to asylum. Anupam also accepts that had he not met Surekha, he would have got married to Leena. By accepting the responsibilities of Apurva and Anupam, Leena felt that her dreams of her own house has turned true.

The second dream of being happily married with a loving husband and having a child, is destroyed partially by her ill-luck and partially by her inability to express her love for Anupam in time. If she had expressed her emotions to him earlier then perhaps he would not have fallen in love with Surekha. Anupam confesses that if Surekha had not entered in his life then Leena would have been his life partner. By remaining silent when the moment demanded speech makes her second dream collapse. After the birth of Apurva the son of Anupam and Surekha, Surekha has severe attacks of schizophrenia and she becomes furious and aggressive to cause harm to Apurva and Anupam both. They finally have to decide to put her in an asylum. Anupam requests Leena to allow him and his son to stay with her which meant that her second dream was fulfilled but still the hinge remained as to it was Surekha's share that had been passed on to her. The novel ends with the question in Leena's mind whether she could consider Anupam as her husband and Apurva as her son though she had always loved them as her own.

Leena's unfulfilled aims and inner turmoil towards the dull monotonous life are further emphasized through the anxieties and disbeliefs towards life by her friend who worked in the office for self-satisfaction and not money, since her father was very rich. Ramila along with Leena represents the modern woman's sensibility towards the
purpose of life. Leena has not left her father's house so the question of leaving and re-entering does not arise. In fact it is Surekha who moves out, is displaced but due to her disease her space is given to Leena.

Whether one could call it Leena's space or her accomplishment of utopia is a question with which the novel ends. Anupam proposes to live with them but the disbelief arises in the mind of Leena.

"आज ये अपने गये अनाथासे मलने हेतु अने...अने...
इतना या अपने घर नहीं होता. अनुपम अपनी पति नहीं है।
अपूर्व अपनी पति नहीं है। अने इतना या दुखदर्नी कुछा ज होती।" (MGH 118).

(Today all her wishes were fulfilled without any effort on her part but...but...this house was not hers, Anupam was not her husband, and Apurva was not her son. And yet this was God’s mercy) (Amin 224).

The novel ends on this equivocal note. The paradox of the situation persists. Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy is briefly dealing with the desire of Leena to possess a home and she does possess in a very precarious conditions. Thus she was free to choose things for the house but not the freedom to choose house. The private construct that is home collapses at the hands of the social construct the family and poverty the economic contract. In this sense family plays a essentialrole in the private / public clash.

On the surface level the conflict appears between Leena and Surekha; but actually it is only within Leena. The novel reflects the duality of the personality. The ideal self that makes her love Surekha and be compassionate to her, the "real self" that hates her and sees her as the biggest impediment in the way of the fulfilment of her desires. She was worn-out and despicable with the name ‘Surekha’ continually in her life. Surekha’s beauty, elegance and charming personality makes her envious. Leena dreaded to look
at Surekha quietly sleeping after the mental disorder, she was terrifically moved from within. Adalja writes:

“जोरे अक्कवालीयूँ शरीर, नीतरती नमोङ्गाश, अक्कीधार
पांडवाणी आंगो…लीनाना मनने घड़ी वापस खे तरत
लागी डूबी गई” (MGH 5).

(Her fair slim body oozed softness, and her sharp petal shaped eyes… Leena’s heart gave a jolt and she got up immediately) (Amin 122).

Leena’s this feeling of bitterness is due to her love for Anupam. Leena has grown up, from childhood to youth, by letting go all her desires to satisfy that of Surekha’s. Be it coaching fees, picnic, visit to friends or parties, books, saris, clothes, parents’ love and care and ultimately even Anupam’s love, one after the other, it were snatched away from Leena. Surekha had developed an obstinate attitude towards achieving everything that she desired for. She had become so uncompromising that she was not habituated to listen to ‘no’ for anything. The novel actually covers a period of almost two years but gives the life story of past twenty to twenty-two years. When unable to cope up with the adversities of life, struggle within and the conflict with Surekha for Anupam’s love, Leena at times felt utterly desolate and helpless. The incident of not being able to go to Ramila's house for party ends the confusion of love-hate relationship with her sisters. She was clear now that she hated her. The novelist writes:

“आ ज शे सुरेन्द्रा, जने वर्षो सुधी पोते याहती हती के विक्षिप्तती हती ते नक्री नकलती करी शकी. आछे हवे तीने
लाचुं के ते सुरेन्द्रा ने विक्षिप्तती हती. खुब विक्षिप्तती हती”
(MGH 13).

(This was the same Surekha, the one whom she still could not decide whether she loved or hated. Today
Leena realised that she hated her, hated her intensely”
(Amin 130).

And still when the moment arises to claim her love she faces the bitter reality that it is not she whom Anupam loves but Surekha. Both the sisters have a fierce conversation and both make desperate efforts to prove each one's claim over Anupam as more justified than the others. Desperate to get her love, Leena yells:

“शामां आंे ना क्यू? ... तारा थे थें थें हस्तिनी खिमत
भारा आंसुकी में यूस्वी छे. तारा मांटे में मारी हरेक वहाली
घीर जत्ती करी; पछए हवे मारही थें नहि बने. अनुपम
तने परचे तें खुं कोट कड़ी नहि सापुं” (MGH 58).

(Why sholudn’t I?... All your smiles have been paid for by my tears. I have given up everything that was dear to me for your sake. But not any more. I will not let Anupam marry you, ever) (Amin 170).

Leena's warning to reveal the secret of her disease does not disturb Surekha. She boldly announces that her love is a rare pearl and is not shining dew which would evaporate. If on knowing her disease Anupam may not marry her but at the same time he will surely not marry Leena- because he loved Surekha and not Leena.

Ramil even very much pressed Leena to convey her feelings to Anupam but the fear of rejection stops her to do so. She is fearful of the insult of her love not being reciprocated and so Ramila's efforts of pursuing her to declare her love for Anupam is not considered. Secondly, she is probably aware that Anupam id infatuated towards Surekha. When Ramila insists that Leena should confess her love for Anupama, Leena firmly replies:

“तु जारे हो ते मनो यात्रा आईएकर्न श्राप पर धरि ने जाय
Leena failed to convince herself of begging for love. Her pride stopped her from doing it. She considered that to be an insult of her respect and so drove away the idea of taking initiative in proposing her love. She had no other way left to fulfill her dreams. She probed her fate, her contribution in keeping the house and its inhabitants and what she received in return:

"आ धर, आ बागीसो, आ बापु जे पोलानु हतु। पोलाना बुजिबारही, जहेमतादी जेक पुज्नी जेम जे आफ्ना धरने आसानीको उठाडी लेङी हती। बहालामा जेने श्रु महसु? बापु जानुपा हती? जेमने भएर हत्ती जे लीनाना अनुपमने सुरेना आहती हती ते, जेनी साधे डरती हती, जेनी साधी सहजातना मधुर स्वप्नो जीती हती।" (MGH 56).
(This house, this garden, all belonged to her. Like a son, without complaints, she had used her intellect and hard work to shoulder the burden of this entire house. But what did she get in return? Did Bapu ever realize what she had done? Did he know that Surekha loved her Anupam, was going out with him and was nurturing sweet dreams of leading a life with him?) (Amin 168).

Leena was entrapped between two opposite pulls. On one hand she felt that 'everything was fair in love and war' but on the very next moment she realizes the meaninglessness of her claims. She was, crushed under all the principles of noble living. She craved to throw away all the masks of being courageous, responsible, and dutiful and protector of the family. But she gives up the idea of telling the truth of Surekha's disease to Anupam. By her very nature she can neither ask for his love nor tolerate disrespect. She is not meant to cry for it, but silently, endure it all alone suppressing her desires. She now wears a mask of happiness and acts out as if nothing has happened in her life. She herself arranges Surekha's marriage with Anupam. Her intense grief of having lost everything in life subsides with Surekha’s pregnancy. Leena presumes that she will get Anupam back in the form of Apurva. The very thought of Apurva makes her crazy. She dearms of infancy and childhood of Apurva. She takes immense care of Surekha. But in her loneliness thoughts puzzled her and brought to the forefront that she was deceiving herself by making the pomp of being happy over the motherhood of Surekha. However excited she would be over the child to be born, but the harsh reality was that it was not her child, it was Anupam and Surekha's child, that Anupam whom Surekha had snatched away from her. Her conscience pinches her that she was trying to cheat herself. With great efforts she drove away such negative thoughts from her mind and whole heartedly nursed Surekha and her son Apurva. Many a times during this an idea lurk in her mind that she had the right to live for the fulfillment of her own desires. She must have Anupam by any means and there was nothing wrong in it. But a conscientious, proud fighter inside her stops her from surrendering to such thoughts. After the birth of Apurva, she forgot her earlier unfulfilled dreams and forgave Surekha also. She compromised with what life had offered to her in the form of Apurva. Her conflict is resolved with a new arrival in the form of a child and her love is reciprocated by the child too. All her
contempt for Surekha being the means of her lonely dissatisfied, loathsome life was readily forgiven and Leena emerges as a new woman.

The moment she overcomes the bitter feelings, destiny bestows upon her all that she had deamed of. Surekha's worsening stage of schizophrenia forces them to put her in the asylum. Anupam and Apurva both now belong to her, yet the question persists; can they really be called hers? Her fulfillment is of different nature but the confusions she has had through out her life speak out the psychological reality of an individual. Harmony lies within oneself, if the person attempts its attainment than surely one acquires it. Leena continuously fights with her own tiny attitude. A desire of having her own house always gives pain to her. The moment she stops complaining about life, and leves the last sting to attain happiness for herself alone, contempt cease in her life and she achieves everything she had desired. Ofcourse the form of this attainment is different. This is her own home and yet it is not hers, Apurva and Anupam are hers and at the same time they do not belong to her. But now there is n hatred in her heart. The war that is within her self, she has defeated hatred thoroughly and therefore the changed form of attainment seems to her as God’s mercy. A home does not mean walls of brick, and sand but a space for total harmony. Leena gets this harmony within her inner self. Now what resides in her heart is only love and affection. She sees God’s compassion in whatever she attains and this is her triumph.

**Conclusion**

Varsha Adalja is primarily concerned with women who are victimized in the socio-economical culture. Her protagonists suffer miserably due to social and cultural norms. Their suffering is also caused due to their inability to express and give voice to their rights and needs. VA has explored the vivid world of women characters in her popular fiction. She emphasized the quest for meaning of life, identity and unfulfilled emotional life of the characters in her novels.

Adalja's characters evolve before the readers through their thoughts, actions and dialogues. Sometimes her protagonists have foils and contrast characters also. For instance Ramila, the friend of Leena was a foil to this protagonist. Ramila worked for her self-satisfaction whereas Leena worked out of utter need. Ramila saw Leena's life purposeful while Leena thought that the reality would be understood only if they exchanged their roles in life.
Her novels focus more on depiction of inner psyche of women. Her women characters strive hard to find their own voice and are continuously in quest for self. For example, Adalja observes in Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy:

“लीना एक भोटियाहें हती, लीना आशाविन्द पुजी हती,
लीना कुट्टनी रक्षा हती, ये बड़ी लीना श्रीमांती लीना
एक स्वतंत्र व्यक्तित्व ये श्रीधी कहती भागती हती” (MGH 60).
(She was the older sister, an obedient daughter, the protector of the family, but from amongst all these Leena’s she wanted to find the distinct personality that was herself) (Amin 172).

Similarly, in Kari Padelo Tahuko, Vrunda wants to find out the meaning of her existence. She says:

“आ प्रेस्वाद, हैतुबिहिन ज्वाननो अर्थ शी हती?” (KPT 67)
(What was the meaning of this tasteless, aimless life?)
(Amin 87).

Like Vrunda, Rupa in A is in search of her existence. Towards the end of the novel, Rupa observes God’s compassion in every creation. She probes:

“ताराथीं उज्ज्वल विलिमां हरिना हस्ताक्षरनो आलेन हती. शु आ ज अग्ना अक्सियरत्रा अर्थनी शीध हती!” (A 261).
(In a bright inscription of stars there is a graph of God’s signature. Is this the search of the meaning of her existence?)
Adalja’s protagonists finally try their best to conform to their roles, and the novels end with an optimistic note with the possibility of some positive action in future. Her women ultimately sees God’s benevolence in every conditions. They come out of the narrow cacoon of their domestic life and sees the vast sea of relationships. The woman emerges in them as a bridge-builder between the old and the new, between tradition and modernity. Through her novels she portrays the stark reality of Indian society and the place of women in it in a subtle and realistic manner. In this sense, her novels are of great value.

The study of the woman in Varsha Adalja’s novels thus capture the understanding that modern woman who are sensitive to the changing times and situations. Her novels exhibit a notable insight into the nature of the innumerable shades of a woman’s inner mind. Women are recognised as individuals who liberate themselves from the traditionality and those who refine their identity in tune with the changed social ambience of the modern times.

Adalja’s outlook is slightly different- sabotage in Adalja comes from within. She mirrors routine life within the framework of family. And thus not only focuses the tensions but also the injustice, the exploitation and the compromises that a woman has to make in her life. Traditionally, in any atypical condition, it is the woman who must bear the burden. Adalja encapsulates such situations by identifying an issue which is not commonly talked about in society and literature. Her women protagonists are positioned in such a framework. From there they then explore their numerous human relationships.

They believe in conformity and compromise for the sake of the retention of domestic harmony rather than revolt which might result in the disturbance of family relationships, till the end. It is this characteristic of consideration, acceptance and understanding of human relationships form the bases for her novels.

Varsha Adalja’s women protagonists are all drawn from the middle class and upper middle class family set up and are sensitive, wise and docile. They are confined in the roles assigned to them by the society and later on attempt to affirm their individuality. But instead of being rebellious the changing times and situations, they accept what is
destined to them and through this acceptance search for self and eventually succeed in achieving self-esteem and inner peace. It is when they forgo to search about self, they discover the true self and sees God’s manifestation in it.

The author exquisitely delineates, the intricacy of human relationship and the predicament of women suffering under the social cultural norms which subjects woman to face silent crisis when they lack mutual bonding and trust in their lives. Lack of identity, loveless marital life, women limited to her conventional roles, treatment of women as a non entity under social structure are recurring themes of her novels. She suggests that a balance between the conventional role of woman and the contemporary issues has to be struck. Conventional roles often limit women and the impact on them is not conducive to attain self status. They are a part of womanhood which does not bring fulfillment to women’s life. Women by rethinking their unsatisfactory roles imposed on them by the patriarchal society, do not attain fulfillment.

The novels selected for the present study have an undercurrent of spirituality. Towards the end of all these novels, the central characters see God’s compassion and thus are liberated from their narrow confined roles. The novels end with the feeling of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ which means "the world is one family".

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