CHAPTER 5

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE
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Matthew Arnold observes:

“No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in its relation to other events and to other literatures” (Dhawan 10).

Arnold’s saying is of great relevance as the basic instinct of human nature remains the same all over the world and hence, its expression in literature is bound to have deep-rooted similarities and affinities. Comparative perspective helps to put literatures of different language and culture together and in the process reciprocal elucidation takes place. It incorporates everyman and all his aspects in its territory. It leads to interesting interdisciplinary studies. It gradually lessens the distance and difference between popular and elite literature. India with its diverse cultural and literary traditions provides a large scope for comparative studies. Keeping this thing in mind this chapter aims to provide comparative perspective of the selected novels of Sudha Murty and Varsha Adalja and to explore both the common ground that holds together and the divergent vision of both the writers.

The need to establish a harmonious human relationships has been the prime concern of men of all ages and cultures. The present study has thus made an attempt to analyse the views of Sudha Murty and Varsha Adalja on delineation of human relationships and bring into sharp focus the basic affinities as well as contrasts in their response to this universal bond.

Both the novelists are artists of outstanding calibre and have their own vision of life. They surpass in delineating the psychological and personal turbulences that affect man and make human happiness vulnerable in the conflict-ridden social scenario, with profound insight and deep vision. Apart from this, it is their deep knowledge of human relationships and their great concern for man to establish a harmonious human relationships that brings them closer to each other. They are extremely conscious of the complexities involved in man-woman relationship and are preoccupied with
presenting its diverse facets. Most of their novels are attempts to project the crucial problems confronting human beings in their effort to establish a healthy and harmonious relationship based on genuine emotions. It can be said that both Murty and Adalja build their plots in a way to use social institutions as means for probing the difficulties which lie in the way of proper human relationships, and presented the characters discovering their own sense of meaning in those relationships. Both are primarily concerned with analyzing the various evils that affect contemporary society and endeavour to explore possible ways of solving some of the problems confronting the individual in the attempt to establish a healthy relationship with fellow human beings.

Sudha Murty and Varsha Adalja have carved their niche in the vast tradition of the Indian women novelists. Their writings are not merely relevant in the present century but their relevance has resulted from changing times and conditions. Their every text in a way is addressed to and relevant to the succeeding generations of readers. The novels of Sudha Murty have been translated into English and different Indian languages. Similarly Varsha Adalja’s writings too are translated into Hindi, Marathi and English language. Their identities as the modern novelists are mainly characterized by the social and psychological features of the human relationship prevalent in their novels. Both the novelists portray the women in the modern India, where they suffer and search for love, happiness and fulfilment of life.

The women’s condition in the society is a determining factor of the progress of society. Among other literary genres, novel invariably records the changes in the status quo of woman in the finest manner. The former study in thematology reveals substantial similarities of themes employed by Murty and Adalja. Both the women novelists respond to the problems of women in a similar manner. Though both the writers differ in projection of image of wife in their novels, they advance from common centre and finally converge upon a common focus. In response to tradition and change they have been guided by their own individual talents and unique sensibilities.

Sudha Murty and Varsha Adalja set themselves apart in their projection of the image of woman as wife in Indian context. The study of both the novelists make the study of
the image of the women complete because they present various slices of life in terms of social, cultural and economical aspects, and places her women protagonists against these various situational backgrounds and explores to expose the strength and fortitudes of their spirit and ethics. Their women face the problems boldly and depict a positive attitude with good ray of hope yet to come in future. Adalja exhibits the importance of faith in life as a great sustaining power. It is the faith in Almighty, and universal love that helps them to endure the suffering and make them strong. To her, the greatest love is not based upon sensation but upon spiritual affinity between human being and nature, between man and his fellow beings and among members of a family. Varsha Adalja studies women’s problems from psychological perspective. Whereas Sudha Murty studies women’s problems from both social and psychological point of view.

Murty’s characters remain subservient and submissive rather than rebellious out rightly. They are brilliant than their counterparts yet suppress themselves for the success of them. But at the moment of self realisation, they assert individuality and sever the relationship for the sake of self-fulfilment and happiness. While Adalja’s characters show inherent strength to struggle against inner as well as outer adverse circumstances. Both the novelists deal with the frustrations of women in an authentic way and do justice to their sensibility. Adalja’s women possess the purpose and determination, ‘the will to act’ or ‘the sense of conduct’ which becomes their saviour. The protagonists of all the novels selected for the present study are Indians to the core and operate within the context of Indian moral values and traditions.

Both the novelists focus on marital relationship. Conjugal Relationship is another basic human relationship depicted in their novels. They treat conjugal relationships in their complexities, portraying the conflict between convention and modernity and pleading adjustment and compromises but not total submission to the traditional roles of husband and wife. Brick and stone build house, but love converts it into home. In our culture it is the woman who moulds house into home. In India, the role of a woman as a wife has the highest value since ages. She is believed to be the mainstay of a family. Marriage is given a lot of importance in a woman’s life. In Indian set up, a girl’s womanhood is considered to be complete once she is married. After marriage she is expected to gratify herself by becoming a mother. Her role as a wife has a
greater connotation in religions, ancient scriptures and literature. Whereas in Western societies, women’s position is measured by the society in all domains like social, political and economical spheres of activity. This has brought in a noticeable change in the role played by woman in society. It questions the position of Indian woman in a family. Indian soil does not remain untouched by this re-evaluation. Therefore it is apt to study the role of woman as a wife in Indian context. Both the novelists show how the married women react to real life situations and modify their life styles.

Both the novelists have presented that loneliness, distress and frustration in marriage that makes them rebellious though not out rightly. Due to lack of communication and mutual understanding, Adalja’s characters suffer from the private anguish of fragmented marriages. While Murty’s women are educated and intellectuals, and hence they are capable to think and dare to stand courageously to face the challenges rather surrender themselves completely to their counterparts. Their women protagonists suffer because they refuse to immerse their individuality and cling to their individuality in any circumstances.

Among all relationships marriage is a serious commitment – a vow of love and companionship during both arduous and ecstatic times. Sudha Murty’s *Gently Falls the Bakula* and Varsha Adalja’s *Khari Padelo Tahuko* explores corporate culture and how the single minded ambition of one partner spoils a charmingly cherished relationship. A bond that binds them together was severed when over ambition and status consciousness subjugate affection and emotional attachment.

In *Gently Falls the Bakula*, Sudha Murty speaks about a husband-wife relationship and how the selfish nature of one partner can spoil a beautifully nurtured relationship. The author advises that a husband must encourage his wife to live her own life. He must not impose his views on her. The author thinks that this will help to create a peaceful family. If a husband does not have any concern for his wife because he is busy, it might invite desertion. Particularly, a barren woman needs more support from her husband. The society and the husband’s parents should not offend or taunt the barren woman, as she is not solely responsible for childlessness. They can advise the couple to adopt a child and lead a happy life. Loneliness may make her take a revolutionary decision as in Sudha Murty’s *Gently Falls the Bakula*. A husband’s
support to his wife’s self-development leads to equality. Similarly, Varsha Adalja’s *Khari Padelo Tahuko also* throws light on corporate culture, the modern materialistic life and its adverse impact on marital relationship. Though Vrunda and Anant initially led a happy and contented married life, Anant’s over ambitious nature drags their beautifully nurtured relationship to disharmonious one.

Owing to Shrikant’s promotion and shifts of places, Shrimati goes on postponing her wish to pursue higher studies. Workaholic Shrikant does not understand the ‘sacrifice’ of Shrimati who in spite of being sharper than him leaves her career pursuits. He does not understand the emptiness which is in the life of Shrimati. Shrimati is an epitome of sacrifice and becomes the face of many Indian women who have, without a moment of hesitation, given up their dreams for the sake of their husbands’ Alike Shrimati in Gently Falls the Bakula Vrunda was also 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 like Shrikant climbs the success of the corporate ladder rapidly and Vrunda lagged behind him. Vrunda realizes that Anant is not there with her in this journey of life since long and deviates her entire attention in nurturing her mentally retarded daughter Shyama. She makes Shyama her sole purpose of life and this gives meaning to her own desolate life. She attains fulfillment in her motherhood.

Vrunda and Shrimati are sensitive, delicate and docile. Both of them belong to rural areas. They go for complete surrendering, becoming shadow of their husband. Vrunda and Shrimati have shown their commitment to their spouse. They have spent the best years of their life together, believing and loyally serving them. But in return they are deprived of love, affection, companionship and support. Both the female protagonists feel null and void in their nuptial relationship. Both of them are frustrated by the business parties and the plastic smiles as they are artificial, moreover instrumental in boosting up their husband’s parties. And yet they silently do it for the sake of their married life. The chord of life that binds them was severed. They set adrift and become lonely. An aching vacuum was created inside Vrunda and Shrimati due to this corporate culture. The emptiness inside them was growing larger. They crave for real happiness. Both of them are the silent sufferers of their husband’s indifferent attitude who are insensitive to the sentiments of their wife. Anant and Shrikant have passion

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for monetary benefits. They failed to realize that relationships are easy to get into, but
difficult to nurture. It demands selflessness, patience, time and care to flourish.
Eventually Vrunda and Shimati realize that their place is not amidst gossipers and
merry makers and moves from the peripheries of their husband’s life. Shrimati leaves
Shrikant with an aspiration of establishing communion with her own self. While
Shrimati transforms her emptiness- devoid of husband’s attention and affection, into
meaning when she decides to pursue Ph D in US, Vrunda achieves this self-
actualization into motherhood. The novels inspire to cherish the nuptial bond and
maintain harmony. They make the reader realize the importance of relationships
despite the domination of money.

The treatment of the theme by women novelists is a three- faceted affair. A personal
story slowly develops into a wider conflict in which are involved the individual's
identity for supremacy and social demands. The personal story, thus, is used as a
springboard to explore social change in India in all its complex manifestations. They
seem to examine the transition from a traditional society to an urban industrial
metropolitan society in its comprehensiveness. The novels of both the novelists are
women centered and woman’s emotions and attitudes are delineated quite
pedantically. Varsha Adalja’s Ansaar and Sudha Murty’s Mahashweta depict the
pathetic conditions of women in spite of a progressing society. Both the novels are
women centered and woman’s emotions and attitudes are delineated quite
pedantically. Mahashweta by Sudha Murty deals with the stigma of leukoderma. It is
a story of a very homely and cheerful Anupama. Ansaar by Varsha Adalja narrates
the predicament of Rupa who is suffering from leprosy. Both the protagonists of these
novels were happy and contended with their life when the novels open. But gradually
an enemy named leukoderma and leprosy enters into their life and from thereafter
their life takes turn and twist. The diseases reveal the true face of their family
members as both Anupama and Rupa were rejected not only by their family members
but also by their husbands. Both the male protagonists of these novels are doctors by
profession. But yet fails to convince their family members the truth of the illness.
Moreover, they take the side of their mother and abandon their lovely and sensitive
wives from their life. Shailesh is a faithful husband, and does not marry to any other
woman after rejecting Rupa. The guilt complex level is little high in him and he spent
the rest of his life serving lepers but doesn’t even try to search Rupa’s wellbeing.
Whereas Anand in *Mahashweta* was merely infatuated towards Anupama only by her physical beauty. After learning about Anupama’s disease, he turns a deaf ear to her plights. He didn’t pacify her nor even met her when he came to India for his sister’s marriage. This has made Anupama’s life miserable. Towards the end of the novel, Anand realizes his mistake and searches for Anupama. But now Anupama rejects him. Anand’s sincere change had no way melted Anupama’s heart. In the first half of *Mahashweta*, Anupama is portrayed as meek, submissive, enduring and condemning her fate and expecting help from her husband. But in the second half of the novel she emerges as a confident, self-sufficient, guiding and a respectable person. Murty has depicted her as a confident woman finding her own identity and building a successful carer for herself. Similarly in the opening of *Ansaar*, Rupa is depicted as a weak and docile lady who could not bear any one’s pain and expects aid from her husband. But a gradual development is seen in her character as the novel moves forward. Rupa finally emerges as a very strong personality finding her own identity and meaning of her existence.

The novels also throw light on the superficial familial relationship. Anupama’s marriage was accomplished with Anand despite his mother unwillingness. And hence Anupama could never win her mother in law’s heart. Unfortunately one day Anupama was caught by Radhakka and her disease was revealed. She treated her like untouchable and send her to her father. She even blamed Anupama for hiding the disease and marrying Anand wilfully. In *Ansaar*, Rupa’s mother in law, Vanalataben considered her like daughter, but as soon as she learnt that Rupa has become the victim of leprosy, she abandons her from her home. 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.

Rupa is an idol of compassion. She is sentimental, meek, delicate and docile compared to Anupama who is brilliant dedicated and determined. By choosing to be Meera’s motherly guardian, Rupa attains and accomplishes her self-actualization. Adalja seems to be more footed in Indian soil as Rupa wish to be foster mother and to serve leprosy patients. This is enough to make them harmonious whole human beings.
Whereas in Murty’s Anupama self-realisation comes by establishing herself in a career.

Both the novels exhibit that though the country is globalised, people too are advanced in making money but not maintaining human relationships. Through these novels Adalja and Murty condemn the stereotypes that we often live with but cannot and do not reject. Both the novels compels the reader to look inwards and question our attitudes.

Through the character of Rupa and Anupama they give some exposition to the fate and trauma of leprosy and leukoderma patients at social level. With the advancement and extension of science and technology, ethical vigour of human society has decreased instead of increasing. Man has conquered the outer world through study, experiments, job and quality life style but not the inner world.

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 a determining factor in Adalja’s *Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy* and Murty’s *Dollar Bahu*.

In *Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy*, Surekha who is a schizophrenic patient, becomes hurdle in Leena’s life. The doctor’s advice to fulfil Surekha’s each and every desire to keep her mental state cool and calm, shatters the doors of happiness for Leena. 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. To make the situation more poignant, the novelist depicts the middle class family. Leena had to sacrifice her education and ambition for Surekha 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. Leena sacrifices not only her aspirations, but also her love. In Sudha Murty’s *Dollar Bahu* Vinuta bears the brunt of economic condition. Her mother in law, Gouramma’s obsession for money than relations affects a family and how it can have its repercussions on relationships. The entrance of the elder daughter-in-law and her wealth made Gouramma to forget the realities of life. She was captivated by the dollar
bahu and started humiliating Vinuta. Both Leena and Vinuta served their family members at the cost of their self but were never rewarded for their earnest duties. In Leena’s life, her schizophrenic sister becomes hindrance in her life while in Vinuta’s life Gauramma’s partial attitude is responsible for Vinuta’s depression. The sibling relationship between Leena and Surekha and mother in law – daughter in law relationship between Vinuta and Gauramma convey an important message that suppression, subjugation and exploitation are not confined to the male-female relationship but exist between female-female relationships as well. Both the novelists do not give evidence of a male dominance, it leaves enough space for female domination in a social set up which again add to the feeling of insecurity for the other related women in the family. Their identity being made subservient to fulfill the needs of the family and their commitment to the values impel the woman to slowly lose her voice and suffocate. Vinuta’s health had deteriorated because of the double standards. A sudden arousal of self consciousness leads to resistance. While in *Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy*, Leena attains self- actualisation by accepting the reality. In *Dollar Bahu*, Vinuta achieves it by leaving for Dharwad with her first family. Emancipation, liberation of self arises from the yearning heart that constantly subjects itself to the turmoil in the process of breaking itself free from the shackles of subjectivity.

A detailed study of the selected novels of Murty and Adalja show that the families in the modern India are not balanced and harmonized. It shows that they are fragmented and disintegrated, leading to the isolated pieces which do not assure their active and progressive future. The social, cultural and economic factors are responsible for disintegration. In the overall family structure, women are the worst victims since they are subservient, neglected and subjugated by the ideological forces within and outside the family.

To understand the disintegrated conditions of the family structures one ought to understand the nature and the rate of social change in the modern Indian society, as depicted by both the novelists. ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ are The two fundamental concepts, which are frequently used in recording social change. T.B. Bottomare (1972) comments:
“The concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ are obviously important in the study of Indian society” (Bottomare 130).

He mentions here W.F. Ogburn’s distinction between material and nonmaterial culture where Ogburn forms hypothesis of ‘cultural lag’. This cultural lag changes in the adaptive culture – which is non-material in nature and do not coordinate with the changes in material culture. It becomes a cause of stress and conflict. Alfred Weber’s similar distinction between ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ as noted by Bottomore, defines civilization as a scientific and technical knowledge and its regulation of natural resources; and by ‘culture’ he means the artistic, religious, philosophical and similar products in a society. The notions, ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’, perceived by Weber and the concept of ‘cultural lag’ formed by Ogburn remarkably focus on the nature of social conditions which govern the life of modern Indian families during the post-independence era, as portrayed by Murty and Adalja. The parents and the in-laws do not show the proportionate change in their notions derived from the traditional social force, perceived as ‘culture’. Their ideas about woman’s life – the wife, the daughter, the daughter-in-law – show the sense of subservience, neglect and exploitation, where they crave for happiness, and satisfaction of living in terms of happiness and harmony. Hence, in the ultimate understanding of social change, the change takes place at civilization level, but there is either stagnation of cultural ideas towards happiness and progress of women as independent human beings with dignity and self-esteem. Thus, the ‘cultural lag’ emerges in the families and consequently, it gives rise to the imbalanced nature of man-woman relationship in its multiple forms, and unintentionally it poses threat to the structure of family leading to disintegration and desolation of women’s lives.

Their characters suffer a lot at the hand of destiny or other fellow human beings. In this process of nullification which appears to the others, as being destructive, is in reality, a blessing in disguise as from this the awakening of individual into a realization takes place. Like the phoenix, they rise from the broken, conflicting and crumbling world around them with internal strength. Adalja’s protagonists evolve from a simple, emotional innocent existence, to a state where they are able to realize not only their ownself but are also able to comprehend and recognize the human
nature. The adverse circumstances make them mature and self-realized individuals. They evolve a deeper understanding and clarity of vision that wisdom consists of accepting life as it is and trying to make the best of it. Murty's women characters develop courage and resilience and establish their individuality by making successful career.

In order to convey her theme, Adalja as a novelist, sensibly uses characters, situations, dialogues, and other elements in relation to the plot. The theme serves as the skeleton, incorporating the whole life-perspective of the novelist, through situations and scenes that are peculiar to her alone. Varsha Adalja’s incorporating of psychological aspect to theme has added a new dimension. The various themes recur and overlap each other in the novels. The unique feature of Varsha Adalja’s fictional artistry is her use of symbols to carry theme, to unite structure to create the filling of wholeness. One finds through a close study of images and symbols in her novels that these elements contribute to the structural pattern of the novels. These image patterns, in turn, record the different states in the novelist's development as an artist. The evolving stages of her philosophy of life are also manifest in her novels. She gets more and more psychologically intended and try to assess the sociological effects on the psyche of their characters.

The various factors of the works, like titles, mode of narration, plot, locale, characterization, and language enhance the themes of the books. The title is the vital part of a book as it captures the essence of the book. It must be powerful and impressive to deliver the impact of the book to the readers at the first sight. The title may be self-explanatory, symbolic or ironic. Most of the titles of the books chosen for the study are self-explanatory, indicating the theme of the works. The title of all the novels selected for the present research are self-explanatory. The title *Mahashweta* is borrowed by Banabhatta’s Sanskrit play- *Kadambari*. While Mahashweta of *Kadambari* wears white to get her beloved, Pundarika, back to life, Mahashweta of this novel turns white. ‘Maha’ meaning big and ‘Shweta’ meaning white. Anupama, the protagonist after rethinking for identity finally emerges as the real “Mahashweta” – ‘the white one’- ‘the pious one’. The title aptly conveys the sense of the book. The Bakula acts as an important messenger in *Gently Falls the Bakula*. The title signifies how slowly the love fades out between husband and wife. Bakula’s attraction lies
purely in its fragrance. The bakula flowers that symbolized the love between them had fallen. The title suggests that Shrimati’s decision is not an explosion, but it is a result of long meditation. The word ‘dollar’ in the title Dollar Bahu hints the importance of dollar in one’s life and its negative impact on human relationships. Similarly, Ansaar has an undertone of spirituality. The title hints God’s manifestation in numerous ways. Khari Padelo Tahuko suggests a bird that could never fly and sing- a child. Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy suggests the protagonists’s earnest wish to have a home that is made up as per her dreams. Home here symbolises Leena’s wish for a family of her own.

Both the novelists choose the name of their protagonists sensibly. Their characters bear names that throw some light on their relationships. There is irony in their names. For instance, Rupa, which means, ‘the beautiful’ has an irony as she suffered from leprosy which forms deformity in the victim’s body. Similarly, in Mahashweta Aupama means ‘the matchless’. She is actually beautiful beyond words but leukoderma takes her beauty away from her. Anant which means infinite tries to amass wealth and power. Like his name his aspirations are also limitless. While his wife, Vrunda means ‘in a group’ feels alienated in the infinite world of Anant. Similarly in Gently Falls the Bakula, Murty’s characters are named Shimati and Shrikant. Shrimati is the name of goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. She actually sacrifices her own aspirations and dreams to prosper her husband’s life. Shrikant like Anant is inclined more towards corporate success and in doing so forgets the sacrifices of his dear wife. Vinuta like her name is extremely obedient and dutiful. Leena strives to attain harmony with her own self.

Most of the books taken for research are not directly written in English. Sudha Murty’s Gently Falls the Bakula, Dollar Bahu, and Mahashweta were written in Kannada language and then translated into English. Adalja writes in Gujarati language. The selected novels for the present research- Ansaar, Khari Padelo Tahuko and Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy are written in Gujarati and among these Khari Padelo Tahuko and Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy are translated into English by Amina Amin and Gita Chaudhari respectively.
Language is the building block of writing which consists of word choice, sentence structure, metaphor, phrasing etc. Language helps to articulate a plot and to put characters within its framework. Murty’s novels use colloquial English language. Wordsworth has once said- “A poet is man speaking to men”. This is absolutely true with Murty’s writings. She captures everyday people and events in everyday language to reach to a larger audience. Her flow of writing is smooth, easy and uncomplicated. Alike Murty, Adalja too opts for lucid language and narration. Her novels also suggest the chart of development as a writer. As she gains experience in writing, she moves from a straightforward narrative to more complex introspective deliberations. In Ansaar she skilfully intertwines the story blending cultural, social and historical elements, with descriptions of the everyday life. In the novel Adalja has used the native dialect amidst her skilful Gujarati and made the fiction more familiar. Sudha Murty’s style of writing in her novels is simplistic yet makes an impact. Adalja in Ansaar has used the local language and slang words to make the facts more appealing and vivid. Murty’s writing has a certain flow, which is communicative and not intended to stupefy with bombastic words. She uses an easy style that is comfortable and provoke or excite the reader intellectually. Adalja’s novels have punchy dialogues which shows the deep influence of her studies of literature on her creativity and her acquaintance with drama while the prosaic nature of Murty’s imagery amply illustrates the fact that she is not much interested in imagery.

According to Aristotle plot is more important than character as a well planned pattern of events achieves some artistic or emotional effect. Plot may be simple or complex. Varsha Adalja’s Ansaar, Khari Padelo Tahuko and Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy have complex plots dealing with the lives of woman. Whereas Murty’s novels chosen for the research have simple plot revolving around a single protagonist. Her novels are quite predictable. Murty uses simple and lucid language without any attempt at glamour.

The mode of narration refers to how a writer weaves the plot and conveys information to the readers. Narrative modes must be appropriate to bring the reader in touch with the stories and to get involved. Murty has opted for third person narrative to give an air of authenticity. Location remains important in giving the characters a physical world to inhabit. The novels taken for the research include real places. Murty’s novels
revolves around real places like Mumbai and Bangalore and small towns of south India. Adalja’s novels takes place in the cities like Vadodara and Mumbai. Sudha Murty’s *Gently Falls the Bakula* is set in Hubli and Bombay. The location of Shrimati’s and Shrikanth’s home is realistic. The idyllic life of Hubli-Dharwad, the harshness and hustle bustle of Mumbai are pictured naturally.

In works by women, there are relatively a few male characters, or they occupy a less central place than the women characters do. Some of the male characters like Anant in *Khari Padelo Tahuko* and Shrikant in Sudha Murty’s *Gently Falls the Bakula* are dominant and self-centered. Some men like Anand in *Mahashweta* and Shailesh in *Ansaar* are not very strong. They cannot take bold decisions to sustain their marriage. Both Anand and Shailesh are doctor by profession and very well aware of the diseases their wives suffer from but they remain quiet in front of their mother’s wish and rejected their ailing wives. Very few male characters like Vinuta’s husband, Girish and Anupam in *Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy* consider women with regards and support them. The fathers in Murty’s novels are either idle like Shrimati’s father or meek and unable to take decisions in *Mahashweta*. Shrimati’s father’s reference is limited in the novel. And when he was referred, it is as an idle father, contributing nothing towards the development of his daughter. In *Mahashweta*, Anupama’s father was described as a poor fellow who does not stand by his daughter in the time of crisis. Leena’s father, in *Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy* is not portrayed as a strong supporter of the family. Rather he is dependent on his daughter for survival. Not only that, towards the end of the novel, he even admits that he knowingly or unknowingly snatched from Leena not only material things, but also her dreams for the sake of one daughter. In *Khar Padelo Tahuko*, Anant remains indifferent towards his mentally retarded daughter Shyama. He is actually busy in preparing his son Sachin to follow his footsteps.

Murty’s female characters in the novels particularly Shrimati in Sudha Murty’s *Gently Falls the Bakula*, Anupama in *Mahashweta* and Vinuta in *Dollar Bahu* are traditional in the beginning but later they become rebellious though in a submissive manner. They have the inner strength to break the age-old customs and traditions. Very few characters such as mother-in-law and daughter in law in the select novels of Sudha Murty are typical and rude in nature. They are rather thick skinned women who takes pleasure in the suffering of their daughter in law.
The personal experience of the author and the locale in which the author lives influences the issue they discuss in their fictions. Murty in her novels exhibits the corporate culture and Adalja’s writings are influenced by her day to day experiences. Tradition and technology and their impact on Indian society find a very good expression in Sudha Murty’s writings. Being the chairperson of Infosys and as a corporate person, Murty meets innumerable people in her life. She observes them carefully and writes about them in her writings. In her writings, Sudha Murty deals with the problems faced by women in the corporate world. Being a teacher and a humanitarian she has a deep insight into the emotions of people whom she meets every day as a part of her work. Her novels are mesmerizing and apprehensible. They are unique and stimulate spiritually the readers to aspire and to attune their mental outlook.

The comparative analysis of some of the novels of Sudha Murty and Varsha Adalja reveals that they definitely share some affinities in their thematic conception and in their attitude to human relationships despite their socio cultural disparities. Murty’s characters are men and women in real flesh and blood, we meet in our routine life. Gently Falls the Bakula focuses on mire of materialism and its impact on conjugal relationship. Mahashweta takes into account the life of lukederma people and their sufferings despite advancing society. Dollar Bahu focuses on how money creates havoc in the peaceful life of people. While reading these novels one feels that these are the characters one meets in everyday life. Varsha Adalja has a penchant for accuracy and hence before writing everyday experiences in her literature, she studies the background meticulously. She has explored lepers’ colonies, prison life and has worked among ‘adivasis’. She stayed among lepers colony, visited mentally retarded children’s hospital and discuss their trauma with them before penning it in black and white. Adalja’s meeting with a mentally retarded child’s aunt compels her to write a novel- Khari Padelo Tahuko. Ansaar is the outcome of her visit to ‘Sahayog Kusthyajna’ ashram for lepers established by Indira and 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- Ansaar.

Socio-cultural changes in contemporary post-industrial societies have opened more avenues for women. Change may be experienced on a micro level or a macro-level.
Even a micro-level change can create a number of options for the individual: new norms of behaviour, new values, and new manners. As a result of change, some members of society assume new status and fill new roles. Change so far has been remarkable. A century and a half ago, women occupied a position of striking subordination. Although women remain still socially disadvantaged, the movement toward equality has surged ahead.

Many factors have contributed to this transformation. Perhaps most important, industrialisation has both broadened the range of human activity and shifted the nature of work from physically demanding task that favour male strength to jobs that require thought and imagination. This change puts women and men on an even footing. And as more women assume positions of power in the corporate and political worlds, social changes in the twenty first century may be as great as those already witnessed. While change may be incremental, one sees a movement towards a society in which women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

Adalja’s novels present various aspects of women’s lives and their roles as daughters, wives and mothers but she is mainly interested in the lives of modern Indian women who have come out in the open raising their voice and forming a community. But unlike the women of Sudha Murty her women are not privileged to have modern education. She has constantly used the term ‘relationship’ in the context that an Indian woman has to play various roles in the family according to the nature of her relationship and she is seldom allowed to venture out of her relationship to make contribution to the public life of the nation. She is also unique in the sense that she writes about the customs and traditions of Gujarat and very skilfully uses local words and terms like ‘Ba’, ‘Bapu’, , ‘Mami’, ‘Bai’ to indicate relationships. However, the treatment of human relationship in her novels is both Indian and universal. Adalja’s female protagonists, who play a pivotal role in human relationships portrayed in these novels, are from the middle class society.

Most of Adalja’s central characters are married women and in search of some kind of freedom, self-identity, economic independence and individual autonomy, even though they do not always succeed. Being adults, their relationships mainly concern the partner, spouse, lover and husband whoever it may be. Presenting these women as
wives seems to be the dominant concern of the novelist but almost all the protagonists like Rupa, Leena and Vrunda turn to their past at some critical moments to reflect on their relationships with their parents, siblings, cousins, friends and neighbours and redefine their relationships in the changed context. In this way the novelist extends the scope of human relationships and gives due importance to the role of other characters, male or female. Husband and wife are quite important as they play the most dominant role in the traditional structure of Indian families, but the older persons in the category of grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts not only play a significant role in shaping their personality in their early years but also represent the traditional value system prevailing in different generations. Siblings, cousins, other relatives, neighbours, colleagues, etc. are minor figures but they also play a significant role in shaping the lives of the major characters as friends and companions and rivals and supporters and provide foils to them. Moreover, there are children of the protagonists, their sons and daughters, to add the needed dimension to their lives and relationships and complete the picture of human relationships.

Adalja differs from Murty in ending her novels. All her novels end with the acceptance of reality. Her novels give message that solution of problems lies in acceptance of life, not in its rejection. However, those seemingly reconciliatory endings accept the fact of human imperfectability and dislocate both men and women from idolized mythical positions. The retreat is not because of the patriarchal trap, socio-cultural conditioning, matrimonial bondage, etc. but because of self-realisation and feeling of necessity following a change in outlook. Their acceptance is not passive but active. The persons who make a retreat are not the same. Rather they are transformed persons and human relationships play an important role in their transformation. They discover their ‘self’ or recover their ‘self’ and gain new insight into their relationship with the help of an association with their parents, family and friends and they return with a new perspective to rework their relationship and make the best of it. Their ultimate acceptance of life and a degree of self-realization that they achieve, make her novel meaningful, cohesive and universal.

Whereas Murty’s women protagonists put individuality above everything. Her women are rather strong in character and take firm decisions to survive in society. Sensitive to the changing times and situations they revolt in a subdued way against the traditions
in their search for freedom and eventually succeed in achieving self-identity and independence. The dualism of the Indian context is come across to the reader who can co-relate to these people, torn between tradition and modernity - between the Indian and western values. This sense of affinity is the greatest achievement of Sudha Murty. Adalja’s women sees God’s will in whatever happens and reconcile while Murty’s women sever the familial ties to achieve happiness. Adalja seems to advocate motherhood above everything. Leena in Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy achieves happiness by becoming surrogate mother of Apurva, Vrunda in Khari Padelo Tahuko deviates her entire attention in the upbringing of her mentally retarded daughter and thus gives meaning to her life and attains self-actualisation. Similarly, in A Rupa’s self-realisation comes in becoming a foster mother of Meera. Whereas Murty’s women attains happiness by establishing themselves in career. Shrimati in Gently Falls the Bakula separated from Shrikant to pursue her long cherished dream of Ph D. In Mahashweta Anupama achieves self-realisation by becoming a professor in Mumbai and directs stage plays.

Ultimately, human relationship itself becomes the rescuer of human relationship. The women protagonists acquire a fresh perspective to reconcile themselves to the situations in their life and move on to live on their own terms without any feeling of guilt or regret. In this way, Varsha Adalja’s protagonists differ from Sudha Murty who liberate themselves from the shackles of traditionalism and becomes successful career women. Adalja’s protagonists face the confusions and disturbances caused by the opposite pulls and pressures of tradition and modernity, look within to comprehend the situation and emerge as empowered persons to resolve the crisis.

With regards to their craftsmanship both the novelists have usurped their respective languages to reveal their thematic concerns. Their artistry nicely unfolds the emotional states and moods of their characters. Adalja’s prose devoid of extravagance of literariness is an example of more humble writing of entertainment and instruction. Adalja’s prose bears the impression of dramatic elements. The noteworthy aspect about Adalja’s 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. Adalja’s characters evolve before the readers through their thoughts, actions and dialogues. Many of her novels are brimming with crisp dialogue – a skill that Adalja has mastered over, perhaps
because of her close association with the theatre. She utilises the ‘stream of consciousness’ and ‘interior monologue’ techniques with great dexterity. Her language adapts itself to the changing situations and characters. Her use of language exhibits her awareness of the natural development of language. Murty’s writings are always rather plain but what attract the readers to them is the depth of her characters and the complexities of their relationships. Both of them have used the modern concepts of time and devices like illusion, dream, nightmare and hallucination. Both the writers through their novels communicate the fallen nature of humans and human relationships. The present comparative study of some of the novels of Sudha Murty and Varsha Adalja has aimed to place the Indian women writers of fiction in a critical perspective, and indicate the significance of this writing to understand various human relationships. Their vision for social change mainly emerges from their presentation of the traditional nature of man-woman relationship in the context of modern times. Being contemporary writers Sudha Murty and Varsha Adalja do not deal with traditional ethics but their novels are centered on the redefined human relationship of present day culture.

REFERENCES


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