CHAPTER 2

LIFE OF SUDHA MURTY AND VARSHA ADALJA AND THEIR NOVELS AT A GLANCE
CHAPTER II - LIFE OF SUDHA MURTY AND VARSHA
ADALJA AND THEIR NOVELS AT A GLANCE

2.1 LITERARY AND SOCIAL MILIEU OF SUDHA MURTY

Sudha Murty, a Padma Shri awardee, is a philanthropist, writer, columnist and a passionate teacher – an all in one icon in the present day. A gold medallist and an outstanding student in Electrical Engineering, she completed her post-graduation in Computer Science. She was the first woman engineer to be selected by Telco, Pune. Her savings of Rs.10, 000/- is instrumental in founding Infosys which her husband N. R. Narayana Murty proudly mentions on several occasions.

Murthy began her professional career as a computer scientist and engineer. She is the chairperson of the Infosys Foundation and a member of public health care initiatives of the Gates Foundation. She has founded several orphanages, participated in rural development efforts, supported the movement to provide all Karnataka government schools with computer and library facilities, and established 'The Murty Classical Library of India' at Harvard University. Murthy initiated a bold move to introduce computer and library facilities in all schools in Karnataka & taught computer science. She got best teacher award in 1995 from Rotary Club at Bangalore.

One of India’s most celebrated entrepreneurs, Sudha Murty is best known for her social work and her plethora of writings. Women and women’s issues form a central part of her novels. Her books have been translated into all the major Indian languages and have sold over four lakh copies around the country. She has written numerous books on the subject of charity and self-realization in her fictions. Sudha Murty’s writings are laced with simplicity, minute observations and wide knowledge of human behaviour. They are based on truth and presented in a wonderful mode. A prolific writer in English and Kannada, She has written twenty books in English and Kannada including novels, technical books, travelogues, collection of short stories and children literature. In addition to this she has written many columns. A multi-faceted personality, she is a successful writer, social worker and a philanthropist who
contributes to various charities in the capacity as the chairperson of Infosys Foundation.

Sudha Murty is a well-known modern Indian writer with a prolific output. Tradition and technology and their impact on Indian society find a very good expression in her writings.

**Early life**

Sudha Murty was born in 1950 in Shiggaon located in north Karnataka. She is the daughter of surgeon Dr R. H. Kulkarni and his wife Vimala Kulkarni. She and her siblings were raised by her parents and maternal grandparents. These childhood experiences form the historical basis for her first notable work entitled *How I Taught my Grandmother to Read & Other Stories* (Maurois). Murty completed a B.E. in Electrical Engineering from the B.V.B. College of Engineering & Technology, standing first in her class and receiving a gold medal from the Chief Minister of Karnataka. Murthy completed her M.E. in Computer Science from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore standing first in her class and receiving a gold medal from the Indian Institute of Engineers.

She became the first female engineer hired at India’s largest auto manufacturer TATA Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO). Murthy joined the company as a Development Engineer in Pune and then worked in Mumbai & Jamshedpur as well. Murthy had written a postcard to the company's Chairman complaining of the ‘men only’ gender bias at TELCO. As a result, she was granted a special interview and hired immediately. She later joined Walchand Group of Industries at Pune as Senior Systems Analyst.

In 1996, she started Infosys Foundation & till date has been the Trustee of Infosys Foundation and a Visiting Professor at the PG Center of Bangalore University. She also taught at Christ College. She was the first woman engineer in Telco. She is a productive writer in Kannada and in English. She has a passionate love for books, music, drama and popular Hindi movies. She is also interested in reading books on Archaeology, Anthropology, Computer Science, Logic and Mathematics.
Awards and Achievements

Sudha Murty, a disciplined writer, a technocrat with the most innovative and skillful mind, has been highly esteemed with awards for her philanthropic and literary acquisition. Dr. Sudha Murty is the recipient of various awards for her contribution to the society. In 2006, she was awarded with the ‘Padma Shri’, the fourth highest ranking civilian award from the government of India and received an honorary doctorate degree for her contributions in the spheres of social work, philanthropy and education. She also received the R. K. Narayan’s Award for literature and the Attimabbe Award from the government of Kannada for excellence in Kannada literature in 2011. She has also been awarded the Ojaswini award, which was presented in Delhi.

Among the many awards conferred on her, the prestigious award Padma Shri, a civilian award from the Government of India, proclaims her contribution to the society. The Best Teacher Award from Rotary Club, Bangalore, Rajalakshmi Award for social work are some more feathers decorated in her cap.

The following is a list of awards for Sudha Murty:

- Gold Medal from the Indian Institute of Engineers, India for having secured the I Rank in M.Tech. of all the branches of Engineering
- Silver Medal from the Chief Minister of Karnataka Sri Devaraj Urs, for securing the highest marks in B.E. of all the Universities of Engineering in Karnataka
- Cash award for having secured the highest marks in SSLC
- C S Desai Prize for standing first in the University Exams of Karnataka
- Youth Service Department Prize from Government of Karnataka, for having been the outstanding engineering student of Karnataka
- 1995: Best Teacher Award in 1995 from the Rotary Club of Bangalore
- National Award from Public Relation Society of India for outstanding Social Service to the Society
- ‘Attimabbe’ award for her technical book in Kannada (Shaale Makkaligagi Computer – meaning computers for school children)
- Award for Excellent Social Service by Rotary South – Hubli
- 2000: ‘Karnataka Rajyotsava’ State Award for the year 2000, for achievement in the field of literature and social work
2000: ‘Ojaswini’ award for excellent social work for the year 2000
‘Millenium Mahila Shiromani’ award
2002: Voted as Woman of the Year by RadioCity [Bangalore FM station] on International Women’s Day
2004: Murthy was presented with the Raja-Lakshmi Award “in recognition of her outstanding contribution to social work” by the Sri Raja-Lakshmi Foundation in Chennai.[13]
2006: Murthy was awarded the Padma Shri, the fourth highest-ranking civilian award from the Government of India, and received an honorary doctorate for her contributions in the spheres of social work, philanthropy and education.[14]
2006: She also received the R.K. Narayana's Award for Literature.
2011: Murthy was conferred honorary LL.D (Doctor of Laws) degrees for their contributions to promote formal legal education and scholarship in India.[15]
2013: Basava Shree-2013 Award was presented to Narayan Murthy & Sudha Murthy for their contributions to society at Basaveshwara Medical College auditorium. Basava Shree award comprises a plaque and a cheque of `5 lakh, Sudha Murthy handed over award money to an orphanage run by the mutt.[16]

Personal life
Sudha Murty married N.R. Narayana Murthy while employed as an engineer at TELCO in Pune. The couple have two children Akshata and Rohan. Her daughter Akshata married Rishi Sunak, her classmate from Stanford, a British Indian. He is a partner at a hedge-fund involved in charity in the UK.

In an interview with the Filmfare magazine, Mrs. Murthy said that she has 500 DVDs that she watches in her home theatre. She sees a film in totality – its direction, editing and all aspects. People know her as a social worker and as an author, but scarcely one knows her as a movie buff. The cineaste, who even went to the extent of watching 365 films in 365 days confides,

“I could have actually become a film journalist. I never get bored of movies!”[Negi].
In an installation ceremony of chairpersons of Ficci Ladies Organisation (FLO), Murty said the advice she got from J.R.D.Tata when she left her job at TATA to assist her husband Narayana Murthy for starting-up a company Infosys which changed her entire life later on. He told her to remember that no one was owner of money. He advised:

“You are only trustee of money and it always changes hands. When you are successful, give it back to society that gave you so much goodwill” (The Hindu).

Murty as a Writer
As one of the leading and successful women writers of the contemporary modern era, her works are a realistic portrayal of the socio-psychological issues faced by the contemporary Indian women. In a simple style, she has analyzed the significant current-day issues in her novels. She has explored in-depth the workings of the inner mind of the women characters in her works. The main protagonists are portrayed as well educated women with the inherent inner power who were ready to face the challenges under any circumstances and emerge successfully by carving a place for themselves in the society within the parameter of the Indian traditional culture. The vignettes in Sudha Murty’s books depict moral values; during conflicts and challenges in life these narratives reinstate values according to the changing socio-culture. Her stories related to the nation, its famous personalities, culture and relationships in a family have helped in shaping an individual’s attitudes towards self and towards the society. Sudha Murty began to pen her experiences, sharing her ideas and thoughts with readers through the columns of newspapers and magazines. These writings have helped many to get on with their lives, not in resignation or despair but with enthusiasm and in peace. As a contemporary writer, Sudha Murty has tried to promote and reaffirm values through her stories that teach us lessons in the several ideals that she holds dear, such as simplicity, patriotism and the importance of love and friendship. Fellow feeling, kindness, charity, patriotism, peace, punctuality and many other values are almost forgotten terms in today’s world.

Sudha Murty makes it a point that her female characters should essentially belong to rural or semi-rural areas. As a prolific fiction author in Kannada and in English, she
has published several books that espouse her views on feminism, charity, hospitality and self-realization through fictional narratives. Murty has concentrated on the marital relationship. Her female characters are delicate, hardworking, dedicated and docile. They normally go for complete surrendering but the very essence of self-respect in them always remains with them, ultimately, forcing them to become rebellions though in a very subdued way. Murty believes in sailing the boat of her writing, rather smoothly. In her novels, Sudha Murty, through her unadorned and unfussy approach towards writing, makes her female characters feel at home within no time. She delves profoundly into the characters she comes across and leaves it to the readers to decide between the good and bad in them (Revolvy). Besides inspecting life from various facets, one can’t help but appreciate her honest attempt to extend and pay a tribute to those traditions and rituals with which the country has grown particularly with reference to relationships where women have a major role to play. Her novels showcase the myriad shades of human nature by being full of people whom we like and dislike, approve and disapprove. Sudha Murthy's forte is simple language and beautiful narration. Her characters are realistic. As she believes that though you reach the sky, make sure your feet is always grounded.

Her writing is based on truth, and presents a wonderful mood, touches the heart of the readers and gives immense pleasure to the readers that they focus on the text. Her writing is clear and simple, alike her, it communicates her ideas clearly. She is a prolific writer in English and in Kannada. Her novels focus on Karnataka villages and the people of small places. She advocates feminism and gives power to her female characters to strike the adverse situations of their lives. She demands the women to give credit to them and liberate the stupendous power of them to accomplish their discernments. She is full of humility and modesty and uses her wealth for the less fortunate people. She acknowledges to the cry and requirement of the impoverished, the destitute and the marginalized portion of the society. She writes in the backdrop of Indian English Literature. The last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed a creative surge in Indian English Writing in general and in fiction in particular. Her writings have not only enjoyed a large and international reading public but have also made us to think and rethink over the serious matters. They had acclimatized with the discernments of balance of our Indian conventions and expect more from the foreseeable future. In her writings she support the less fortunate and give a happy
ending to her novels. She follows the advice of JRD Tata and gives back to the society what she had reciprocated from the society. Her women characters are abrasive, educated, respectable, from middle to lower middle class individuals and overwhelmed by the disagreement pertaining to modernity that have escorted into their lives. They are also concerned with principles, money, acclamation, accomplishment and how they lay impact with their marriages and social relationships. Her novels are fascinating; they are understandable, unique and stimulate spiritually the readers to aspire and to calibrate their mental outlook.

Sudha Murty draws one’s attention to the contemplation of Indian consciousness that bestowed through legendary episode, characters, their saga and the relationships. She dives deep into the heart of the characters and focus on the absurdity going on in them. She writes instinctively as one seems as their own story. She focuses on the atmosphere of native grace in her writings and the readers become well acquainted with the Karnataka places and ascertain the glimpses of villages. The names of the characters are also from Karnataka. Sudha Murty’s art and mind is reflected in the creation of her novels. In House of cards, she focuses on the disposition of the people when they have more money. She also describes the pretentiousness and sheer greed of the characters.

Works
Murthy is a prolific fiction author in Kannada and English. Runa, Dollar Sose, Kaveri inda Mekaangige, Athirikthe, Guttondu Heluve, Hakkiya Teradalli are some of her most loved books in Kannada. Her book How I Taught My Grandmother to Read has been translated into 15 different Indian languages including Assamese, Hindi and Marathi. Other famous books by her are Wise and Otherwise, Old Man and his God, The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories and Gently Falls the Bakula. Furthermore Marathi movie ‘Pitruroon’ is based on a story written by her. Sudha Murthy’s novels capitulate to the reflection of Indian consciousness that presented through legendary episodes, characters, their experiences and the related situations etc as a collection of procedure.
Books

Kannada

- Samanyaralli Asamanyaru
- Mahashweta
- Yashashvi
- Tumula
- Kaveri Inda Mekaangige
- Guttondu Heluve
- Manada Matu
- Dollar Sose
- Paridhi
- Makkaligagi – Nanna Mechina Kathegalu (children's stories)
- Runa
- Hakkiya Teradalli (travelogue)
- Shalamakkaligagi Computer
- Athirikthe
- Sukeshini Mattu Itara Makkala Kathegalu
- Computer Lokadalli

English

- How I Taught My Grandmother to Read
- Something Happened on the Way to Heaven
- The Old Man and His God: Discovering the Spirit of India
- The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk
- Wise & Otherwise
- Gently Falls the Bakula
- The Accolades Galore
- The Bird with Golden Wings: Stories of Wit and Magic
- Dollar Bahu
- The Accolades Galore
- Changing India
- Sweet Hospitality
- Fasal cut
Her Novels at a Glance

Mahashweta

*Mahashweta* is a poignant story about a young girl, named Anupama and her battle with leukoderma, an unjust stigma imposed on her by society and how she faces it. The novel revolves round Anupama. She is affected by leukoderma and brings out the trials and tribulations she faces in her life. It reveals, on the side, the skin-deep nature of relationships which comes out in crises. It is an inspiring story of courageous resilience in a world encrusted by illusions and betrayals. With the advancement and expansion of science and technology, ethical vigor of human society has not increased. It has indeed decreased. Man has conquered the outer world through study, experiments, job, quality life style but not the inner world. There is lot of variation shown in Anupama’s character in *Mahashweta* that is shown as a typical of all the victims of leukoderma in Karnataka. It exposes many superstitious beliefs of people whose prejudices govern the society even today. But in Mumbai she again emerges into a different individual who does not consider what people talk about her. The novel has an impact on the readers because the approach of the issues are Indian. *We have our past glory, heritage, golden history and cultural achievement which have not been continuing up to contemporary time. We hardly realize our present barrenness. We bask in our past achievements and do nothing. We have become stagnant in the contemporary feature of India in each and every field against the backdrop of a large and glorious past* (Sasikiran). Thus, it can be said that *Mahashweta* shows human being’s self-exploration comes only after a severe suffering but not as a normal individual. There is a lot of emotional trauma on the part of the protagonist to refine as an individual. Ideas in the novel mainly focus issues like love, marriage, divorce, social taboos and inhibitions, indifference towards the victims of disease like
leukoderma, problem of rehabilitation after abandoned by the family, extent of growth and recognition as human beings and crisis of conscience and values by the fellow human beings (Sasikiran, SD: 2013).

_Gently Falls the Bakula_

A realistic fictional, _Gently Falls the Bakula_, presents the agony of work ethics and modern life style. In a very simple but heart touching way, the story presents a couple- Shrikant and Shrimati and the events that shakes their life. It presents the dark side of corporate lifestyle.

Sudha Murthy’s first novel _Gently Falls the Bakula_ is the story of a marriage that loses its way as ambition and self-interest take their toll. Written nearly three decades ago, it remains startlingly relevant in its scrutiny of modern values and work ethics. _Gently Falls the Bakula_ is a realistic-fictional read from Sudha Murthy. It was originally written in Kannada and translated into English. The style of writing was simple and neat, a perfect portrayal of Indian speech. The novel is a fascinating tale about the beliefs, the family enmity, the typical mother-in-law and sister-in-law v/s daughter-in-law animosity, the misconceptions about educational qualifications, and the practices surrounding marriage and match making are all quite known. Though Indian society is changing, antiquated thoughts still exist in the older generation. Shrimati, like the Bakula is unassuming and quiet in her ways, though she is intelligent and passionate about several things. And like the Bakula, it is in her later years, after she 'falls' and had 'dried' that her 'fragrance' becomes sweeter and she comes alive again.

Sudha Murthy’s novel _Gently Falls the Bakula_ has its protagonist Shrikant graduating from IIT-Bombay, he consequently joins a software firm and become its director. Shrimati, his wife though more intelligent than him, gives up her further studies and manages his house. After almost half a decade of marriage, she realizes that her husband has become too focused on his career and has no place for family matters or to think about her. Eventually, she takes a decision that leaves their family life shattered. The novel was written more than three decades ago, in fact it was Sudha Murty’s first Kannada novel. Though written decades ago, it's relevant even to this date. The book beautifully written exposes the problems within marriage and how
obsessive rise to the top without giving attention to the life partner can destroy marriage.

*Dollar Bahu*

*Dollar Bahu* depicts the delicate relationships that exist in every family. It is the story about the aspirations, dreams and struggle of a traditional family. In a very heart touching manner it shows how money can create havoc in the life of any family, if things spin out of control. *Dollar Bahu* (Dollar Bride) which tells the tale of NRI marriages was adapted as a Hindi serial for Zee TV and had a successful run. According to Murty, it is the story of a mother-in-law who thinks the Indian daughter-in-law is not as good as her counterpart in the USA — the Dollar Bahu who lives in the golden land. The mother-in-law craves to be with her son in America and later when she herself spends a year there, she realizes that the problems most Indian-Americans face in the USA are similar to those back home and that the grass is not always greener on the other side. The novel is essentially about middle-class Indians’ aspirations to get rich on money from USA, often through a son.

The novel *Dollar Bahu* by Murty explores the hustle and tussle of staying in India or abroad very nicely. At times, in life there is no villain, but circumstances choose to be our enemies. Due to the poverty and lack of education that Gauramma has witnessed in her childhood, she's enchanted by the dollar as iron fillings are attracted to a magnet and thus resorts to all these comparisons. The author has tried to answer quite convincingly why a majority of us have a deep rooted desire to fly off to other countries. Some of the reasons are that people who work hard are suitably rewarded there. Single women, widowed or divorced are not treated with contempt. No power cuts, water shortages or corruption and the list is quite long. In India on the other hand, we are marred with corruption, unemployment, poverty and scarcity of resources to name a few. So, we leave our families and friends back home and try to look for the same kind of warmth in the new friendships there. We want our kids to study abroad, gel with the Americans but still imbibe our culture and traditions, leading them into an identity crisis of sorts.
House of Cards

*House of Cards* explores human relationships and holds up a mirror to our society with truthfulness and with conviction. The novel was first published in Kannada language as *Paridhi* in the year 2004 and was later translated into English language in the year 2013. The author in the novel *House of Cards*, portrays in a realistic manner, the life of the modern day society. It is about the emotional and psychological journey pertaining to the dilemmas and the internal conflicts faced by the majority of the present day society. This novel analyzes as to how ambition leads a person in quest of supremacy and material wealth. This results in corruption and slowly the breakdown of family life and individual’s behavior. *House of Cards* is all about the life of Dr. Sanjay and Mridula, the couple whose family life fell like a pack of cards unable to withstand the velocity of the wind. The reason being the ambition of one person, Dr. Sanjay, whose psychological craving for power and money led to the end of their married life.

*House of Cards*, as the name suggests is about the home - family ties and the balance needed to keep these ties healthy. Sudha Murty has put across the story in a very simple and effective way. Nothing is over dramatised. Things are put across subtly and beautifully. The story also touches upon subjects like corruption and partiality of the system towards people with contacts. It exposes the dilemma and the difficulty of the masses who want to work hard and just don’t get the fruits of their labour, purely because they don’t know the right people. This book is all about family and the importance of one’s identity specifically a woman. It portrays how a woman sacrifices so many things for her family however doesn’t receive equal importance from her family. It depicts how strength from a mother/wife/daughter can help the family to flourish though respect/affection is not given back to her. And finally it teaches that every woman should be independent and treated equally neither inferior nor superior. *Her identity should not be diluted and she should be able to pursue what she likes...no ego no hassles....this is the key to a healthy and peaceful relation!* *(The Hindu)*. The novel House of cards concerns the home, the family relationships and the essential equilibrium needed to keep them healthy.
The Mother I Never Knew

What secrets lurk in a family’s past—and how important are they in the here and now? Sudha Murty’s new book comprises two novellas that explore two quests by two different men—both for mothers they never knew they had. Venkatesh, a bank manager, stumbles upon his lookalike one fine day. When he probes further, he discovers his father’s hidden past, which includes an abandoned wife and child. Ventakesh is determined to make amends to his impoverished stepmother—but how can he repay his father’s debt? Mukesh, a young man, is shocked to realize after his father’s death that he was actually adopted. He sets out to find his biological mother, but the deeper he delves, the more confused he is about where his loyalties should lie: with the mother who gave birth to him, or with the mother who brought him up. The Mother I Never Knew is a poignant, dramatic book that reaches deep into the human heart to reveal what we really feel about those closest to us.

2.2 LITERARY AND SOCIAL MILIEU OF VARSHA ADALJA

Daughter of a famous novelist, Shri Gunvantraí Acharya, Varsha Adalja has latent talent for arts and literature. She has achieved an eminent place in Gujarati literature through plethora of short stories, novels and dramas. Her stories and novels have continuous novelty. She does not like similarity in narration and hence, her creativity has uniqueness. She took up writing to come out from the trauma of the sad demise of her father. To bring her out from the grief her husband, Mahendra Adalja gifted her pen and papers to begin writing something; and thus her first detective novel Pach ne ek Pach came out. As a result, Gujarati literature received a talented writer. To create is as simple for her as to breathe. Creativity is in her vein. She has written numerous detective novels and people's indifference towards Gujarati detective novels pinches her. She is conscious of repetition and for that reason her each novel is different from other.

Early Life

Varsha Adalja was born in a milieu that would obviously have been congenial to a future writer. Born on April 10, 1940 in Mumbai, Adalja graduated in Gujarati and Sanskrit literature from Mumbai University in 1960. She completed M.A.
in Sociology in 1962. For next three years she worked as an announcer in Akashwani Mumbai. She received a scholarship for training in dramatics from Delhi National School of drama. She carved her niche as an eminent writer in Mumbai from Jan 1966. Her sister Ila Arab Mehta is also a novelist. She inherited the seed of literature from her parents. Today her entire family is into the field of writing. Her two daughters- Madhavi and Shivani and her sister are also considered renowned writers.

Initially she was inclined towards dramas and plays and later on towards novel. She trained at the National School of Drama in Delhi and has produced features, and plays for television including dramatized versions of her own novels. At present she is a full time writer with many books to her credit. She was passionate about dance, acting and music. At the miner age of twelve, she began participating in plays and her first role was played in three act play Jagteraho. Along with several other plays, she had acted as a heroine in the drama version of Darshak’s Jher to Pidha Jani Jani and Henrik Ibsen’s A Doll’s House. Her drama titled Aa Dharti aa Manvi is based on Vietnam war. It won the second prize in the one act play competition organised by Calcutta Gujarati Sahitya Mandal in 1966. Her another novel, Atash bagged the Gujarati Shitya Akademi award and Soviet Land Nehru Award.

Like her novels, Adalja’s short stories too are marked by variety of theme and artistry of expression. Without getting bogged down with experimentation, she has evolved a narrative style which continues to attract a vast readership. Anuradha, Bilipatra nu Chothu Paan, Ganth Bandhya Akash are some of her well known short story collections.

Apart from her novels and short stories, Adalja’s output in the field of teleplays, skits, script writing, also writing full-length plays, essays and travelogues is impressive. Many of her novels have been adapted for television serials and telefilms. However, it is as a novelist that she has etched a place for herself in the pantheon of Gujarati literature.

Varsha Adalja began performing for ‘Rangbhoomi’ from the early age of eleven, acquiring for herself a name in the world of Gujarati theatre by her lively
performances in a number of Gujarati plays including Ibsen’s Doll’s House in translation. She missed enrolling at the National School of Drama, New Delhi, where she had procured admission because of problems of health. This accidental circumstance as also the closing down of ‘Rangbhoomi’ was responsible perhaps for the change in Adalja’s artistic expression from acting to writing.

Before she actually took to writing, she did a stint as a broadcaster with Mumbai ‘Akashvani’ (1961-1964). The creative spark in her, later prompted her to contribute articles on diverse subjects in periodicals like ‘Shri’ and ‘Sudha’ and the daily ‘Mumbai Samachar’. Needless to say these contributions become the stepping stone, as it were, for her later writing, both fiction and non-fiction.

Adalja began writing her early novels under the influence of the “Perry Mason” genre and her Panch ne ek Panch is well known among readers in Gujarat. However, her first published novel was Shravan Tara Sarvada. Written in just a month, this novel launched her career as a novelist, and since then, she has not looked back. Writing novels on the documented facts was not very common among Gujarati writers, but Adalja not only undertook such writing but also excelled in it. She studied at first hand problems related to retarded children and the ‘Adivasis’ living on her border of Gujarat, also those related to the tragic plight of the victims of leprosy, and the mental torment of prisoners. And it speaks volumes about her artistic expression that works like Khari Padelo Tahuko, Gaanth Chhutiyan ni Vela, Ansaar and Bandivan which spring from these sources continue to attract readers even today.

She has incessantly written teleplays, skits and ring, interviews, magazine programmes, radio plays etc. Her novel Mare pan Ek Ghar Hoy which has undergone many (6-7) reprints was telecasted on Mumbai television in the drama form. On Ahmedabad television it was serialized. Her Retpankhi has been dramatized by herself for T.V. Also her Timir Na Padchhaya was dramatized into three Act play and it ran up to hundred shows, including in London. She has the experience of journalism too.

Adalja started her literary career as an editor of Sudha, a women's weekly from 1973–1976, and later with Gujarati Femina, another women's magazine from 1989–90. During this period that she came in direct contact with the varying phases of human
existence which motivated her further as a creative writer. She holds an executive office with Gujarati Sahitya Parishad since 1978. She has explored lepers’ colonies, prison life and has worked among ‘adivasis’. She has penned 40 books including 22 novels and seven volumes of short stories. Many of her works were translated in Hindi, Marathi and English. She has also written travelogues, translations, plays, compilations etc. She definitely holds a prominent place as an experimental novelist in Gujarati literature.

**Awards and Achievements**

Along with Rajatram gold medal, Varsha Adalja was conferred the Sahitya Akademi Award for gujarati language for her novel *Ansaar*, 1995.; Soviet Land Nehru Award in 1976; Gujarati Sahitya Academy Award thrice for 1977, 1979, 1980; and Gujarati Sahitya Parishad Award, 1972 and 1975.

**Varsha Adalja as a writer**

Except verse, she has given her contribution in numerous prose literature. She has also given a considerable contribution as a columnist and numerous literary activities. She has produced an award winning television film on leprosy. Many of her novels delineate women’s lives and reconnoitre the problems they face in the contemporary world. The broad range of life in a modern city is also central to her writings. In several novels she has taken up topical themes and used settings such as the Vietnam War (*Atash*), or the life of hill tribes in Madhya Pradesh(*Ganth Chutya ni Vela*). Her novels often portray women who have consistently been exploited and marginalized but who gain strength and insight through those very experiences. She researches her background meticulously and thoroughly before creation. The apt delineation of prison life, life of tribal of MP, war, life of leprosy people etc. have become possible because of her in depth study of the subject. She has deep sympathy for leprosy patients. This is definitely felt by the reader as well. Her novels aptly and vividly reflects the social life. She has created plethora of stories depicting social and psychological life of women. Human beings and their problems have always remained at the center of her writings. As Ila Arab Mehta remarks:
"सर्जनांना केल्यांना हंपेशा मालास किंवा ने. कोई भी सर्जक मालासनी बाधकाची करून कोई रचना न करू शकेच. मानवीयोंना तुतेल्या अनेक चिन्हलिंग संबंधांनी पूल सर्जक अने संवेदनशीलताची दृष्टीने रच्या देवानी छे" (Mehta 3-4).

(Human being is always at the centre of creativity. No creator can create by subtracting man. The creator has to rebuild the bridge of torn and twisted relationship of human beings through his sensitivity.)

This indicates that humanitarian approach is of utmost importance for Varsha Adalja. Re-establishing the broken relationship is visibly highlighted in her novels. The pain of human pressurised between destiny and existence is at the centre of her novels.

The vivid variety in the subject and theme of her novels are captivating. She has a wider and extensive experience of life and the same is narrated in her writings. She has the experience of both rural and urban life and this is exhibited in her creation. She minutely observes all the dimensions of life and thus they became the subject of her creation. Sociology was her main subject in her study. As a result she came in contact with numerous social institutes as a part of her field work. This way she came in touch with the problems of contemporary human beings. This experience is deftly reflected in her novels. Her experience in journalism has added novelty to the world her novels. She has contributed in the various fields of society. As a student, journalist, business person, and as charitable works, she came in contact with varied types of people. And therefore, she has portrayed them all in her novels. The characters she saw in this social life, situations, incidents and language were aptly adopted in her novels. Her life was pulsed from jail, various strata of society and numerous inclinations, attitudes and emotions of folk characters. Her works show that she has tried to peep into the inner world of such characters and appraise their complex inner world.
She is highly sensitive towards the trauma and anguish of innumerable people. An experience of traveling with a mother of mentally retarded child moves her from within and induces her to write *Khari Padelo Tahuko*. A photograph in Life Magazine of soldiers brutally tearing open the child in the womb during the Vietnam War shocks her very much. She Adalja cries for the entire day with her small daughter Shivani in her lap and wonders, "why war"? She then decides to write a novel on War. *Atash* is an outcome of this incident.

Her writings show her extensive experience of world. As a sensitive and sensible writer, Adalja has given creative shape to the psychological and social problems of women, suffocation of city life, poverty, and women’s pride as an individual, marginalisation of woman in the name of modernity. As a woman, her writings express the ire of woman’s plight. Her writings captivates the reader. She writes to express her thoughts, sentiments and beliefs. As F. Scott Fitzgerald said:

> “You don’t write because you want to say something,  
> You write because you have something to say”  
> (BrainyQuote).

This is very apt in case of Varsha Adalja. Adalja emphasises creativity to experimental or popularity. She remarks:

> “वार्ताओं आधुनिक के प्रयोगात्मक होय तो ज साहित्यमां  
> नयु परिमाण साधी रक्षा के लोकप्रीय होवाथी पाहू तेना  
> अस्तित्वात्मणे अर्थ सरी शक्षे च . अे वादविवाहने बहुले  
> वार्ताओं कलात्मक हे अने वायकोना मन सूधी पत्ते चे अे  
> ज मारे मन मूळ व्यङ चे” (Preface ‘Ae Story collection).

(The new dimension in literature can be achieved if stories are modern or experimental or its existence can be fruitful as it is popular. Instead of debatable, stories
are creative and reaches to the heart of the reader. This is the main thing for me.)

She has penned almost genres of prose Gujarati literature like short story, novel, play etc. and has made new experiments in the field of writing. Though she has written short stories, essays, travelogues, novel and drama, novel have always remained at the center of her interest and attention. The actor and dramatist in her are ever present in the novelist. Compactness of her plots and extremely natural and live dialogues are instances to that. Except detective novels, all her novels are on social realism. Some of them bear strong element of 'contemporariness.' With *Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy* (1971) she gets acknowledgement as a talented Gujarati woman writer and over the years she has now secured a place among the leading writers of Gujarati literature. She was conferred the prestigious 2006 Ranjitram Suvarnachandrak for her over all contribution to Gujarati Literature. She believes that:

“It is the work of the creative writer to light lamp in the dark corner of the society” (Adalja in Divyabhaskar P-3)

Varsha Adalja possesses her own place among the modern Gujarati writers. Realistic presentation of the post-independence social life has made her novels and short-stories important document of social events.

**Literary Works**

**Collection of Short Stories:**

*Ae* (1979)

*Sanjne Ubar* (1983)

*Aendhani* (1989)

*Bilipatranu Chothu Paan* (1994)

*Ganthe Bandhyu Akash* (1998)

*Anuradha* (2003)

One Act Plays
Mandodari (1998)
Vasanti Koyal (2006)
Shahid (2003)

Essays
Pruthvi Tirth (1994)
Na Jane Sansar (2002)
Akhu Akash Ek Pinjarama (2003)

Novels
Bandivaan (1987)
Ansaar (1992)
Trijo Kinaro (2001)
Shravan Tara Sarvada (1968)
Ek Palni Parakh (1969)
Timir na Padchhaya (1969)
Panch ne Ek Panch (1969)
Nilima Mrutyu Pami Chhe (1977)
Avaj no Akar (1975)
Mrutyudand (1996)
Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy (1971)
Matinu Ghar (1991)
Aatash (1976)
Chhevat nu Chhevat (1976)
Khari Padelo Tahuko (1983)
Aa Chhe Karaghar (1978)
Ananddhara (1976)
Aeni Sugandh (1997)
Pachha Farta (1981)
Ret Pankhi (1974)
Ganth Chhutyani Vela (1980)
Partham Paglu Mandiyu (2008)

Travelogues
Nabh Jhukiyu (2002)
Apart from these she has written Vaansno Sur and Ghar Bahire. Amar Prem Kathao is a compilation of short stories. She has also translated Hindi novelist Krushna Sobati’s Mitra Marjani in Gujarati language.

Thus Varsha Adalja has written in plenitude in Gujarati prose literature. But amongst all she was highly successful as a novelist. Her career as a novelist began with Panch ne Ek Panch which is a suspense novel of murder.

**Her Novels at a Glance**

Varsha Adalja has penned about twenty one novels. People's indifference towards Gujarati detective novels pinches her; and to break the taunt about detective novels in Gujarati she has written numerous detective novels as well.

In the initial stage of her career she has written a suspense novel Nilima Mrityu Pami Che.

**Bandivan**

Written in 1991, Bandivan deals with the life of prisoners. The vivid description and narration of the documented (realities) facts of the painful condition of the prisoners in jail shudders the reader. The description of atrocity exercised by the jail authorities is spine-chilling. Women children and psychologically distressed prisoners are ruthlessly treated by the jail officials. The novel interweaves the numerous systems-Marriage system, education system, casteism, laborours’ exploitation, corruption, exploitation of prostitutes, and tyranny on prisoners.

**Anasaar**

The novel revolves round a leprosy patient named Rupa. Though Rupa’s husband is a doctor she is left to herself without the help and support of her family to manage her life. One cannot avoid the question rising in the mind, what kind of treatment Shailesh would have met with had he been in the place of Rupa?
**Ganth Chhutya Ni Vela**

Based on a true life incidence, *Ganth Chhutya Ni Vela* describes the life of tribunals in Madhya Pradesh. She has taken the particulars by staying among the tribunals. Her attitude is that of a student. She reads and collects all the materials before crafting her work. The novel centers round the life of Lt Shri Chunilal Maharaj.

**Shag Re Sankorun**

A trend setting novel written in 2004, *shag re sankorun*, weaves a complex plot among three women characters, Vasant the mother and Meghna and Amruta (Ami) her two daughters. Vasant is married to Krishnakant who after the birth of their first daughter Meghna gives an oath to his dying mother to carry on the family tradition of Krishna worship. Vasant was compelled to sleep in another bedroom as Lord Krishna shifts into the bedroom of Krishnakant. In addition to this, he also takes a vow before Goswamiji of forsaking the company of woman. Vasant is young and modern in her outlook towards religion and considers such a vow as humiliating and unjust as it deprived her of her rights as a wife. The novel unveils the hypocrisy and corruption involved in the name of religion. Meghna has always followed the footsteps of her father and has never learnt to think beyond her fathers' line of thoughts. Even when she has to decide her life partner she is not able to take decision like her sister Ami who has allowed herself to develop individually, away from the influence of anyone or any thought or any institution. After her marriage with Sanskar, the only son of an opulent industrialist Mr. and Mrs. Somani, she realizes that Sanskar was sexually impotent and her decision was a hasty one. Even after knowing this, Krishnakant wants to make a compromise with the Somanis. At the end of the novel, Vasant asks him to leave the house and go away from their lives. It is for this very reason, the novel is considered to be a trend setting. Until now Ibsenian type novels are available where the woman bang the house, but it is perhaps for the first time that a woman made the man leave the house. Krishnakant’s action in making Vasant leave his bedroom is counter balanced by Vasant’s reaction in making Krishnakant leave the house itself.

**Trijo Kinaro**

Another novel having the same theme of marital disharmony is *Trijo Kinaro* (2001). It weaves round Ashumi, a strong and determined woman who does not bow or break
down when she comes to know that her husband Neelambar has an extra marital affair. She walks out of Neel’s life when she is pregnant but this too does not for a moment make her weak in decision towards self esteem and self assertion.

**Matinu Ghar**

Lata is the central character of *Matinu Ghar* (1991). She is in a hospital under psychiatric treatment and observation as she has accidentally killed her husband Anand while actually intending to kill her vicious father Mangaldas. Lata from her childhood has a silent spectator of her mother’s pathetic conditions at the hands of Mangaldas a gambler. Even the daughters Neena and Lata could not escape his bulling nature. Neena is married in a rich family. She commits suicide, while she was in the third month of pregnancy. Her mother Kunjbala later understands the meaning of what Nina had once said that she shall never become a mother. Her husband was impotent and she was raped. This becomes the cause for the quarrel between her parents and Mangaldas happens to kill his wife unintentionally. The two deaths haunt Lata to such an extent that she becomes almost schizophrenic. She can not endure the presence of Mangaldas before her. Once she sees him in the kitchen and runs behind him with a chutney making stone. Mangaldas calls Anand for help and Lata out of ire and revenge does not see him in front and smashes his head. She demolishes her life with her own hands.

**Ek Pal Ni Parakh**

This social novel touches the depth of inner mind of human beings. Written in a flash back technique, the entire novel revolves round a mother and her son, Indraneel. Initially, there is a mute conflict between the mother and the son, in the middle direct conflict and in the end inner conflict between them becomes the reason of ruin of entire family.

**Khari Padelo Tahuko**

*Khari Padelo Tahuko* (1983) is deals with a compassionate theme. Vrunda has 12 yrs old son and she in her 34th year becomes pregnant again. The news of her pregnancy does not excite her or make her happy. For quite sometime a detachment has gradually been 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. Unintentionally he drags his son also in this current and Vrunda is left all alone. At this juncture, she is going to become a mother of a second child, for whose birth she is quite hesitant. After a profound thinking she decides to give birth to this child. Few months after the birth of the child (daughter) it is detected that she is mentally retarded. Now, Vrunda’s life revolves round the life of Shyama. Anant does not pay any attention to the treatment and care of Shyama. 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. Written in a flash back technique, the novel highlights the pomp of city life verses simplicity of rural life.

**Ananddhara**

*Ananddhara* (1976) takes the subject from the life of Merlin Munro and narrates the life struggle of an actress. The plight of woman at the hand of man is shown here. It centred round poverty and prostitution. Rani is obsessed with a dream- dream to make name and money in the world of glamour. In her hunt for such things, she leaves her husband Manas far behind. Rani is a daughter of a poor prostitute. She always wished to shed off her dirty past. Quite late in life she realizes that she was spoiled by men to achieve their selfish ends. She leaves Mumbai for Haridwar and decides to commit suicide by drowning in the river Ganga. Nirmalbabu, a saintly figure saves her and she is resurrected. Tarun and Kilol, the two children give meaning to her life and also show her the true path of happiness in life. She learns in the midst of Nirmalbabu, Tarun and Kilol that tender care and selfless love for others is the only way to attain happiness. She does not leave Kilol even when he catches small pox, which was then considered a fatal disease and curse of goddess. Later Manas also joins her.

**Retpankhi**

*Retpankhi* (1974) tells a touching story of Sunanda, an orphan girl brought up by her paternal uncle and aunt. Tara and Sunanda are brought up in a village and one day Tara elopes with a taxi-driver. Sunanda is made to marry a middle aged widower who has a daughter Amla and a son Vinay in their teens. Sunanda has challenging time making place in their house as well as hearts. Hardly when she has attained their love
and confidence, she becomes a widow. Meanwhile she had cultivated a soft corner for Sridhar the friend of Vinay but the relationship dose not blossom since Sridhar leaves for Delhi for a better future. Sunanda’s plights begin as an orphan child ill-treated by her aunt, and ended by becoming a mother to the daughter of Tara, who was pressed by time and circumstances to live a life of prostitute. She then becomes a schizophrenic patient. Her own dramatization of Retpankhi was telecast on TV.

**Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy**

*Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy* (1971) deals with a delicate relationship of love and hatred between two sisters. It narrates the story of two sisters and their plights in life. Leena is the elder sister and Surekha the younger. Surekha is a schizophrenic patient and Leena has to give up her higher education and aspirations for the sake of her sister. Gradually all the responsibilities of the household fall upon her shoulders since 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 excavated the inner landscape of Leena’s mind and heart. The novel ends with Surekha ultimately sent to an asylum and Anupam’s hint to Leena to allow him and Apurva his son to live with her. The novel was telecast on Mumbai TV in five parts. It was translated as a periodical in *Samarpan*.

**Timir No Padchhayo**

*Timir No Padchhayo* (1969) deals with the life of childless Malati, who is in her forties. She looks back at her past eighteen years of married life and feels that there is no emotional bond between herself and her husband Dinkarrai. He is an reputable judge well known for his impartial justice. But knowingly or unknowingly he does injustice to Malati, Manbai and her son. The course of the novel takes a turn when it is disclosed that he has a son by a maid servant named Manbai, a result of his youthful infatuation. The son is in prison for he had killed his step father, who was a devil incarnate for him and his mother. Manbai goes to Dinkarrai to make an appeal to save their son, which is over heard by Malati too. Malati wants Dinkarrai to pay for his mistake for which a woman had to suffer all her life. But he is concerned about his name and reputation in the society, which would be tarnished if the truth revealed. But ultimately he has to surrender giving up his false notions of reputation. Malati, left the house and Manbai committed suicide. Dinkarrai is left to live his life in the darkness.
of loneliness. Later on it was dramatized as a three act play and has almost over 100 shows.

_Shravan Tara Sarvada_

A family problem is depicted in this novel. It narrates two families- one an affluent and the other a middle class. They have friendly relationship but there is a difference of culture. The affluent family has forgotten the values and ethics whereas the family of Prabhudas has more values. The novel ends with happy note indicating the triumph of sanskaar over affluence. This is her first social novel.

_Aatash_

The novel deals with a society crushed by war.

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