

CHAPTER TWO

ANALYSIS AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE ORIGINAL AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF *SAAT PAGLA AAKASHMA* APPLYING LEFEVERE'S TRANSLATION THEORY

Through this chapter I intend to undertake an examination of the portrayal of women characters in a famous novel *Saat Pagla Aakashma* (1984) that has been hailed as the first landmark novel of Gujarat exploring the theme of feminism by a renowned woman writer Kundanika Kapadia (1927-2020) with the aim to survey the changing notion of representing the image of women in literature and how the female characters become a vehicle to express the writer's ideology reflecting the changing connotation of gender in Gujarati society and literature. Along with that the comparison of the original novel with its English translation *Seven Steps in the Sky* applying Andre Lefevere's theory of 'Translation as Rewriting' is commenced to observe the extent to which the target language and culture affect the cultural and semantic aspects of the original leading to a representation (and at times misrepresentation) of Gujarati literature, society and gender connotations. The hermeneutics and the cultural background of the translators are also observed closely to see their impact on the translation activity along with addressing the question that how deep set patriarchy continues to guide/misguide even the so called privileged 'Token Women' (Rich, 3) (the author as well as the translator) when they attempt to represent gender through their literary texts.

2.1 Introduction of the Author and the Translators

Kundanika Kapadia (1927-2020) was an acclaimed Gujarati author. The credit to bring forth the feminist ideology in Gujarat literature is bestowed on her. She married a famous Gujarati poet Makrand Dave (1922-2005). She had been an active social reformist and she along with her husband founded an ashram called Nandigram in Vankal village in Valsad district in 1985 and worked for the improvement of the lives of the tribal of the region. She has penned three novels – *Parodh Thata Pahela* (1968), *Agnipipasa* (1972) and *Saat Pagla Aakashma* (1984), short-story collections – *Premna Ansu* (1954), *Vadhu ne Vadhu Sundar* (1968), *Kagadni Hodi* (1978), *Java Daishu Tamane* (1983) and *Manushya Thavu* (1990) and collections of essays – *Dwar ane Deewal* (1987) and *Chandra Tara Vriksh Vadai* (1988). She has also translated texts from English and Bengali into Gujarati. She has

been a recipient of many prestigious awards including Sahitya Akademy Award for her novel *Saat Pagla Aakashma* in 1985. Her fiction reflects her deep concern for nature and sensitivity towards the foundation of human relationship. Her perceptions regarding the transformation a relationship goes through after an inner awakening is often reflected in her fiction giving it a special dimension.

Kunjala Anthony (1936) along with her husband William Anthony (1932-2017) has translated this famous novel into English in 1994 as *Seven Steps in the Sky* published by Navbharat Sahitya Mandir. Kunjbala Anthony is the younger sister of the original author. William Anthony was born in Australia and he had a degree in Greek language. Kunjbala Anthony has been residing in Australia for the past fifty four years. She and her husband William Anthony both worked as librarians in Australia. This book was their only attempt at translation so far.

2.2 Summary of the novel

Saat Pagla Aakashma was published by Navbharat Sahitya Mandir, Ahmedabad in 1984 and its title emblems an effort to discover newer implication of the seven vows taken during the marriage ceremony along with an effort to break the barrier of the pressing social norms to gain freedom (the word 'sky' signifies freedom). The novel immediately caught the attention of the readers, critics and other writers of the era due to its radical feminine concerns. Before Kapadia many writers, both male and female, have showed concern for the deteriorating position of women in society and appealed to improve their condition. However, their appeal was subtle and without much hint about achieving this goal. While Kapadia, through this novel, takes a bold step by putting across her feminist views in quite an open and revolutionary manner to stir the consciousness of the society with a clear allusion of the ways to achieve a more respectable position for women. Most of her women characters belong to the middle-class strata of the society and though initially they prefer to surrender as per the societal expectations, during the course of the novel they realize that to improve their lives and status they need to take the front seats rather than meekly submitting to the unjust social traditions and with this aim they challenge the societal norms with newly found courage to seek some novel alternatives in real time for women to strive for their rightful positions in family and society. As Aruna Bakshi says, "Catching the feministic conception so zealously, the novel – *Saat Pagla Aakashma* has opened up unlimited possibilities in this field" (my tran.; 149).

Kapadia's intrepid manners and confidence in form of this book created diverse reactions where on the one hand she was hailed as a great writer for her spirit to advocate women's rights explicitly by a number of women readers suffering subjugation while on the other hand she was accused by many men and women of provoking and misleading women and writing a novel which is 'anti-man'. The argument continues till date yet she must be given her share of credit for introducing the radical feminist ideology to Gujarati readers with alternative solutions for the traditional system and for becoming a torch bearer for many successor writers for years to come.

This Sahitya Akademy Award winning novel's theme is spun around the life journey of the central character Vasudha who is an ordinary woman with an extra-ordinary level of consciousness and intelligence. Through this novel the writer Kundanika Kapadia sets a new benchmark of feminist concern in Gujarati literature and Vasudha becomes the carter to bring this awareness through her life, decisions and her uncompromising attitude to the minds of Gujarati readers. Vasudha, who although comes from a humble background, sets a new paradigm through her tremendous courage, individuality and awareness and she opens up a world of possibilities for women who had never consciously considered themselves worthy of any respect or credit. In words of Vaishali Raval, "Kapadia considers Vasudha's character as a prototype of middle-class Gujarati women in the 1980s. Clearly, she writes with a set agenda: to raise awareness of women's inequality, and to revolutionize their conditions" (490-491).

Vasudha was born into a lower middle class family and she was the third daughter of a family of five daughters. She married Vyomesh, a son of a well-to-do family, without getting any opportunity to know him out of family and societal pressure and after marriage she moved to Bombay. Vasudha was a sensitive woman who loved nature in all its elements, particularly the sky. She loved to spend her time under the evening sky observing the changing hues with the approaching night. Once in the evening before her wedding day when she went to the terrace to collect papadums, she was spellbound by the radiant evening sky and was lost in observing its majesty when she had a magical experience. She felt as if the sky was giving her a message of freedom and joy and at that moment she promised herself that one day she would live a life of complete liberty just like the open sky. She was an ardent reader and her parents were very proud of this fact. But all her desires and sensitivity were gradually crushed under the cold heartedness of her husband and Foiba (aunt-in-law) and the load of the daily chores. Her husband Vyomesh was a practical minded person who lacked

the ability to express his emotions while Foiba never showed any sympathy or compassion towards her due to the traditional role she was playing of the mother-in-law who was never expected to exhibit any kindness towards the daughter-in-law in India.

An emotional and kind person like Vasudha felt suffocated in this new atmosphere but she never uttered a word against it due to the patriarchal values imbibed in her since childhood which discouraged her to offend her in-laws. She secretly hoped that if she continued to obey to their wishes quietly then someday her husband and Foiba would comprehend her desires and sentiments and respect her as an individual. But to her utter despair she realized that her in-laws never intended to accept her individuality or understand her sentiments. As Leela Dube has rightly said regarding the condition of a married woman in Indian society, “A woman should thus be able to discard...all earlier loyalties and habits and get absorbed in the husband’s family. At the same time, her identity as an outsider is not easily forgotten” (113).

She tried to find refuge in Vyomesh’s company but to her disappointment she soon realized that Vyomesh’s love and attention were limited to only the physical aspects and did not reach deep down. The load of the household chores increased more after the birth of her three sons and Vasudha felt completely helpless due to the lack of any support from her husband or Foiba. She herself did not exhibit any courage by articulating her desires due to her societal fear and thus she suffered tremendously at psychological level. The root cause of her distress was actually her awareness of her rights and her inability to execute them due to many personal and social reasons which caused her much pain and sense of guilt. Still deep down she had a secret longing that one day she would be able to spend her life as per her desire where she can be true to herself and this wish gave encouragement to her during tough times.

Through her life journey she came in contact with other women who were struggling to seek some meaning of their existence and were victims of the conservative social norms like her friend Sumitra (later Mitra), her neighbours – Vasanti, Lalita, Ranjana, the women she met at Anandgram – Anna, Alope, Jayaben, Isha etc. Through the analysis of their lives and struggles, Vasudha tried to make sense of her own life and figured out the position of women in society. After observing the condition of the women around her, Vasudha came to a realization that a woman, irrespective of her social or economical background, has to suffer injustice at one point or the other and to earn a respectable position in society she is expected

to sacrifice her desires and dreams. She can never live a life of freedom and self-respect where she is able to lead her life on her own terms due to rigid societal norms and expectations. Through Vasudha's encounter with other women of the society, the writer indicates the gradual rise of awareness in women's consciousness regarding the politics of gender in society in the Post-Modern era. As Raghuvir Chaudhari and Radheshyam Sharma have correctly observed, "...because of their position in the patriarchal order women share a common experience of oppression that could become the basis for solidarity. The process of consciousness raising brought women together to talk about their experiences, and through mutual sharing, they came to understand that what they thought were merely personal problems were actually politically overdetermined. Consciousness-raising asked women to examine how their own lived experiences contradicted the dominant ideology and to recognize the ways in which internalized societal norms keep them complicit in their own oppression" (357).

To be able to live a life of her dream, a woman must pave her own path by challenging the socially accepted norms and may have to bear harsh criticism for the same. In the sweet name of sacrifice, the society takes away all her freedom and burdens her with unfeasible expectations and responsibilities of becoming an ideal wife, mother and to maintain the goodwill of the family. And in dealing with the double layered burden of the household work and family responsibility, a woman's aspirations are soon forgotten. The multiplicity of a woman's role creates conflict in her mind and is a source of constant anxiety for her. In words of Kate Millet, "...to be simultaneously wife, mother, and mistress to one's own husband causes stress for women that male role conflict does not... men are not expected to play their multiple roles full-time; it is expected that a man will spend most of his time not as husband, father, and lover, but as a worker. Hence multiplicity of roles is a minor problem for men, while a major one for women" (15).

After thirty five years of performing her duties as a wife and mother, one day Vasudha realized that it was time for her to fulfil the promise she made to herself many years back and live a life based on the principles of freedom and self-respect when she noticed her husband Vyomesh's heartless behaviour on receiving the news of his Foiba's death who had sacrificed her entire life to look after him when he had lost his parents quite early in life. Vasudha understood the truth of their relationship and soon lost faith in him. Vasudha apprehended that it was time for her to start living her dream life and fulfil her dreams without being answerable to anyone. As a result she announced retirement from her roles as a

wife and a mother and began voicing her inner thoughts and aspirations. Initially she converted the small store room of the house into a room of her own and shifted there but Vyomesh did not appreciate it and started to threaten her. Despite Vyomesh's disapproval, her children were on her side but they were scared of the father and so they could not openly express their support. Later Vasudha came to know about a settlement called Anandgram through her cousin Vinod and one day when Vyomesh slapped her and later demanded divorce as she tried to express her right over her jewellery, she came to find refuge in Anandgram to be a permanent member of the residence.

Here she was surprised to find a settlement based on the ideal of mutual respect and freedom where all the members live like a family still each one had the liberty to live the way s/he desired without feeling guilty about it, where members could express their opinions openly without the apprehension of offending others, where each member would respect the privacy of the others and still experience the closeness and warmth of a family life. For Vasudha all these was like a dream but soon she got accustomed to this new way of life and finally found solace in the company of the likeminded people in form of Anna, Jayaben, Abha, Agnivesh, Isha, Swarup, Alop and especially to her long lost friend Mitra (Sumitra). In the company of these open-minded people, she could share her life story and troubles without any hesitation and found salvation. She also built her house by selling her jewellery and started helping other members involved in one or the other craft like Mitra was into carpet making, Agnivesh started a bakery. Later she could meet Aditya here, whom she had adorned during her younger days, who kindled her desire of social welfare.

After a few days the residents of Anandgram came to know about a crime where the son of a Minister had raped a girl of poor household to take up a revenge of an insult. Along with Salina (Vasudha's daughter-in-law's niece) and Mitra, all the members of Anandgram decided to fight against this crime and with the help of a few NGOs, they conducted a large procession where Vasudha took a lead along with Mitra and Salina. Together they tried to convince the women in general to extend their support to stop such violence against women and demand justice. To their surprise they received a huge support and thousands of women joined the procession marching quietly towards the Minister's house. On reaching there they demanded the Minister and his son to appear before them but they were completely flabbergasted when the police started beating them without any warning causing some serious injuries to many women. Mitra, being the leader, was hit hard on the head and she lost her life as a result. Even after this fearsome incident the protest did not stop and out of public

pressure the criminal committed suicide. Mitra's death came as a big blow and the loss was irreparable but they were satisfied that their efforts were not wasted and ultimately justice was established. This incident filled Vasudha with new level of confidence and vigour and later when Aditya offered her to accompany him to the Himalayas to work for the betterment of the condition of the downtrodden people of that region, Vasudha found a goal of her life and she readily agreed. Even Salina and her friend Krishnan joined them and finally Vasudha was able to live a life of new found joy with a mission to serve humanity. The novel ends on a positive note with Vasudha, Aditya, Salina and Krishnan's departure for the Himalaya and the other members of Anandgram seeing them off at the railway station.

The novel is the first attempt of its kind where a woman writer exhibits her guts and confidence to voice her inner most feelings and desires through her literature and characters depicting the changing scenario of the emergence of a new society where gender ideology is altering rapidly bestowing equal status to women and where women are no more considered as a commodity or saddle but as important asset of human race. Kapadia has been influenced by the feminist ideology which emerged in the West in the early twentieth century, particularly the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s and she has made efforts to redefine the configurations of not just female identity but that of family, society and gender. Unlike the earlier generation women writers, Kapadia does not hesitate to challenge the strongly imposed patriarchal notions that push women into a dependent life. Expressing her views on how 20th century Gujarati women writers represent women and their issues in literature Satupa Chaudhuri comments, "Seemingly oscillating between the individual urge for self-fulfilment and the social demands made on women for self-sacrifice, these women writers create characters that, when driven to the wall, make bold choices for the survival of their core being. By making choices, these women characters are challenging the system, questioning authority, searching for, negotiating, as well as appropriating their identities and their status both in the family setup and the larger social structure. Believing that a change in the condition of women must begin with a change in their own consciousness, the contemporary Gujarati women writers portray women as gradually coming to realize their own oppression in their short stories and novels" (180).

As Showalter (1941) has distinguished three phases of women's writing namely *feminine*, *feminist* and *female* in her milestone work *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) which represents the various strategies adapted by women writers to quench their thirst for creative writing and to establish themselves in the world of literature. According to her these three

phases represent – imitative phase, reactive phase and self-discovery respectively. In views of G. S. Jayashree, Indian regional literature by women has passed through four stages –

- **The Submissive Phase** – this phase – from approximately 14th century till early 19th century – mirrors Showalter's first phase (*feminine*) which lacked in any innovation and women writers mostly belonging to a royal or wealthy and liberal minded families who received the benefits of education and they could write and publish their works. The literature composed during this period is mostly repetitive (most of the literature produced was based on the themes from mythology and religion) and conventional lacking any literary technique and the works remained mostly fragmented and uncollected due to the tradition of anonymity
- **The Progressive Phase**– by late 19th century women's writing has gained much confidence due to various factors like spread of education, freedom struggle, social reform activities etc. The writers of this era critiqued the stereotypical images of women represented in literature and history as figures of sacrifice and sorrow and made conscious efforts to exhibit their concerns for the condition of women in society and demanded justice. Their literary efforts were greatly aided by the publication of various literary journals and magazines which assured them of significant readership and recognition
- **The Regressive Phase** – This phase reflects the disillusionment of women during the post-independent era which failed to fulfil the promise of freedom for women who bear equal share in the fight for independence. Women expressed their dissatisfaction towards the socially imposed roles of being an efficient wife and educated mother and started challenging them in the changing world which formed around them. They started stepping out of the confines of their houses for the sake of education and profession which filled them with new vigour and sense of independence and now they could not accept the male dominance which is downing on them with greater force. And this gave rise to the literature of resistance reflecting their deep rooted frustration
- **The Assertive Phase** – Post 1980s period describe this phase where women writers emerged with greater confidence and wrote from the standpoint of woman and depicted their journey into selfhood where instead of complaining or criticizing the patriarchal system, women started to look for newer ways of life making peace with

herself with the help of new found vitality and poise. With their contribution to various literary genres, especially fiction, women writers proved their literary skills. Unlike the submissive phase, various women writers emerged from lower and upper-middle classes of society experimenting with contemporary themes of dilemmas faced by women while keeping balance between the demands of the modern world and traditional society. The advancement in education and rising professional avenues opened up a whole new world of possibilities for women and the women's writing in Indian took a new turn with a whole range of themes, techniques and genres (91-96).

If we assess Kundanika Kapadia and her writing based on the above analysis, we can claim that she belongs to the fourth phase that is the Assertive Phase as she represents the contemporary issues of women in the fast changing world posing newer challenges for them reflecting upon how they reconcile their positions and power with the help of their education, talent and optimism heading towards a better tomorrow in real time. They do criticise the conservative and unjust social system but instead of meekly surrendering to the norms they prefer to find new definition of their existence and alternative possibilities to improve their position and begin their journey towards finding their identity and self.

The settlement depicted in the novel – Anandgram – is based on the concept of an ideal society and family unit which is found on the bases of respect, trust, and freedom. The writer has tried to portray her image of an ideal society which gives highest priority to inner quality of a person without considering caste, gender or status. It is almost a Utopian settlement where despite any number of difficulties ultimately justice is established, freedom and self-respect restored and personal ambitions merge into social welfare. This kind of settlement also provides women an opportunity to openly share their concerns along with providing them shelter and the writer has taken her feminine concern a step forward by building this strong image of an ideal settlement through her literature. In Mary Ann Ferguson's opinion, "One of the main emphases of the Women's Liberation Movement is on "consciousness raising," which takes place in leaderless groups where women share their experiences openly and learn that their problems are not unique. As they realize that they are not alone in finding the old roles intolerable, women gain the strength to question not their own sanity but the validity of the stereotypes. Literature, by reflecting the new stereotypes, contributes to consciousness raising and helps women to overcome the sense of isolation, which has been one of the main instrument of their oppression in patriarchal society" (32-33).

The central character Vasudha's love for nature and her philanthropic spirit actually reflect the author's own concerns for nature and humanity. Kundanika Kapadia had been a lover of nature and had worked tremendously for the benefit of the tribal of South Gujarat region along with her husband Makrand Dave after her settlement at Nandigram. The greenery of Nandigram reflects the author's closeness to nature and the ashram's social welfare activities mark the philanthropic spirit of Kundanika Kapadia.

2.3 Analysis of the representation of Women in the novel

I would like to conduct an analysis of the images of women represented through this novel under a few categories like – patriarchal/anti-patriarchal, psychological and futuristic or utopian.

Vasudha – Vasudha, being the central character of the novel, becomes the carrier of the feminist ideology of Kundanika Kapadia who is hailed as the first feminist writer of Gujarati literature. There were other women writers of Gujarat who exhibited their concern for women's issues in their literature and voiced their protest against the social injustice prior to Kapadia like Lilavati Munshi, Vinodini Nilkanth and many of her contemporary writers like Ila Arab Mehta, Varsha Adalja, Himanshi Shelat but no other writer or their women characters could gain as much popularity as Kapadia and her woman protagonist Vasudha. The main reason for the writer's fame could be that while the other writers' acquired a softer tone and expressed their concern subtly, Kapadia obtained a rebellious tone with gripping narrative to gain an upper hand. The image, fears and dilemmas of Vasudha, the protagonist, are quite close to the real ordinary woman found in society while her courage to break free from the binding social norms is the deepest desire of any woman in the society striving for freedom and respect and so she was so well-liked.

The writer has portrait Vasudha's character with two extreme shades where on the one side she is presented as an ordinary middle class woman but on the other side she has some extra-ordinary personality traits like higher level of intelligence, awareness, her aspirations of social welfare especially in the matter pertaining the improvement in the condition of women. Her exceptional quality is her consciousness and ability to question the socially accepted norms which do not allow a woman to lead a life of respect and equality. Although she plays a role of a housewife and a mother later and is forced to compromise many a times due to the boundaries of the traditional role, she is never disheartened and strives to fulfil her aspiration of a life of freedom and respect.

She is well aware of the fact that all her qualities and dreams have shattered under the constant pressure of household work, the expectations of her husband and in-laws as well as of society. She gradually realizes that even after toiling for the whole day, her work as a housewife will never earn her a respectable position as she is financially dependent on her husband. She even questions the social system which gives more importance to certain work (especially done by men in the outer world) while deteriorates the others (household work done by women). In opinion of Maithreyi Krishnaraj, “Most women have lived without access to means of social definition and have worked outside the spheres of reward and recognition...women as a distinct social group had established patterns of behaviour, special legal or other socially sanctioned restrictions, custom defined roles which limited their opportunity to gain social recognition” (39). Even in the case of a woman performing double duties of running the household as well as earning money as a professional, her position is still considered subordinate to that of her husband due to her gender.

Vasudha is a lady with soft heart and pure spirit and she is attracted to nature since early childhood. She makes full efforts to understand and support her husband and Foiba during thick and thin and expects nothing but love, warmth and respect in return but when they fail to provide them, she feels disappointed. Her gentle spirit and fear of society do not allow her to rebel against her husband or aunt-in-law, despite her awareness of their exploitative behaviour, as she is well aware of the boundaries of the traditional roles she is playing of a wife and a daughter-in-law and she cannot express her disapproval openly. Sudhir Kakar has rightly portrait the condition of a bride in Indian society, “In the social hierarchy of her new family, the bride usually occupies one of the lowest rungs. Obedience and compliance with the wishes of the elder women of the family, especially those of her mother-in-law, are expected as a matter of course...” (62)

Vasudha feels nervous due to the uncertainty of the new situation she is put into after marriage and her helplessness is the source of her constant suffering and humiliation. She represents the dilemma faced by thousand of married women who go through the same psychological trauma when their thoughts, feelings and anxieties remain unspoken. More than anything her awareness of the injustice done to her due to her gender in the name of social norms and family harmony is the core reason of her suffering. She well realizes that a woman does not enjoy equal rights and freedom in society due to the rigid social traditions

which always keep her at a deteriorating position and does not allow her any freedom of choice. A woman's helplessness is more driven by society's expectation of her and her constant struggle to fulfil them than her efforts to reconcile with her own aspirations. To quote G. S. Jayashree again who defines the role of gender in social construct in the following words, "While sex refers to the biological differences between women and men, gender relates to what is masculine and what is feminine – it refers to the identity of women and men based on socially defined roles that are assigned to one sex or the other. As such, gender is best defined as a relationship within relationships, between women and men within the same household and outside, that differentiate and define the roles of gender. These differences are reflected in perceptions, roles, opportunities and the like. In a complex societal context like that of India this translates into a negotiation of power, both exercised and denied" (91).

Vasudha's heart yearns for a social and family system which is found on the ground of freedom and equality, love and respect and she strives to find her rightful position. Her search ends in Anandgram which is an example of an ideal social and family unit and Vasudha ultimately finds deliverance.

Although Vasudha spends many years of her life under the pressure of constant fear, humiliation and injustice, she is a woman of courage as she is never dispirited and would not like to compromise on her dreams. She never allows herself to forget about her dream life even while struggling to maintain her self-respect. She keeps on reminding herself that one day she will definitely be in a better position and would lead an independent life of respect. She has been waiting for all these years to come across an opportunity and Foiba's death opens up a door which can lead her to a desired life. She finally could exhibit courage in form of announcing a retirement from her duties of a housewife and mother but her husband Vyomesh does not appreciate of her decision and threatens her of divorce in front of her children. Vasudha exhibits ultimate courage in form of her abandoning her house and moving to Anandgram permanently. Even in the face of resistance she does not wish ill for her husband or others who often caused trouble for her. As Sutapa Chaudhuri opines, "For women, family thus becomes a site for struggle where they have expectations of security and mutuality yet experience denial, fragmentation, subordination and consequently, alienation... To give voice to their silence and suppressed desires, they start looking for alternatives as they hope to live life differently. The women in these writings are striving against the

socially-imposed ideological bondage of subordination : from darkness they are moving towards light, from confinement to freedom, from alienation to mutuality” (180).

At Anandgram she finds peace and privacy, respect and equality she has been yearning for and in the company of equal minded people she tries to share her deepest frustration and finds the answers of all her uncertainties regarding true human relationship in society. Anandgram becomes a ground where Vasudha blossoms fully and is able to discover her own abilities which were suppressed during all the years of dependent life. She discovers her own strength in the company of the residents of Anandgram – she realizes her leadership skills during their fight for the justice for the rape victim. Vasudha’s skills and qualities gain her admiration and fill her with new level of poise in life. At the end of the novel, Vasudha decides to take her life to a next level after her new found confidence in her abilities by departing for the Himalayas with Aditya to work for the upliftment of the people, especially women of that region. She is now completely content with her life and is looking forward to her philanthropic activities in her dreamland that is the Himalayas.

Sumitra (Mitra) – Sumitra (Later Mitra), who befriended Vasudha, is an educated girl, full of life and is looking forward to an independent existence. She is always pressurised to get married by her conservative family. Once she gives in to their pressure and agrees to marry a decent boy only to realize that the groom’s side has demanded dowry. She runs away from her house and takes shelter at Vasudha’s place for a few days but being a revolutionary at heart, Sumitra is restless to bring some positive change in society and she decides to use this opportunity for her mission. She goes back to her family and agrees to marry the same person only to expose the groom and his family later. She, along with a few of her revolutionary friends, openly opposes the dowry system on the day of her wedding and she denies marrying in such a family. Although tough from outside, Sumitra is a sensitive person, in need of love and affection and she gets attracted towards Animesh whom she finds to be a sensible person but only to be disappointed later on when she realises that he is a married man. She is heart-broken and she decides to cut off her relationship with him but when he tries to convince her of his unsuccessful marriage and promises to marry her after getting divorce from his first wife, she cannot resist his offer as she is head over heels in his love. After a while she could see through Animesh’s futile efforts to be separated from his wife and she feels completely devastated when ultimately she receives the news of the birth of Animesh’s child. She immediately breaks off with him only to face depression and hopelessness in life. Being a brave woman, Sumitra (Mitra) later turns her frustration into her strength and becomes a full

time social worker working with a few NGOs for the welfare of women. Sumitra is in search of her identity and she realizes her own strength in the course of her encounter with harsh realities for women in the patriarchal society which generates in her hope to fight for the rights of women to gain equal and respectable position for them in this world.

Vasanti – Vasanti is a charming lady with striking personality who is attracted towards Satish during her college days due to their common interest in music. She is an excellent singer with melodious voice and Satish always appreciated it. Later they get married and their circle of happiness gets complete with the birth of their first child. Vasanti feels on top of the world in the company of a loving and caring husband. Satish soon starts to ascend the steps of success as a famous music critic, comes in contact with prestigious singers and music directors still his appraisal for Vasanti and her music skills does not lessen a bit. However, the story takes a different turn as one day after listening to a famous classical singer Kesarbai Kerkar in a concert, a desire is kindled in Vasanti's heart to learn classical music. When she shares her wish with Satish, to her surprise, he discourages her and asks her to find solace in her house. Vasanti feels dejected as she gradually realizes that Satish only wants her for his sake, to look after his house and children so he can work in the outer world with ease and he does not appreciate if his schedule is disturbed due to any of her wishes. But Vasanti's desire to learn classical music is so strong that going against Satish's denial, she enrolls in a music school and starts learning classical music. Satish does not react openly but he starts neglecting and taunting her and she notices that a distance has developed between them. Later she gets to know of Satish's attraction for a famous singer Sugiti Banerjee and Vasanti feels utterly lost. After a while Vasanti is detected with breast cancer and she really is in need of his emotional support during this critical situation. But to her surprise Satish's response is rather cold lacking in any genuine affection and warmth. Vasanti soon realizes that love has evaporated from their married life and she shows maturity by letting him go with the other lady without creating any scene and when Satish also agrees, she is heartbroken again. Vasanti's efforts of stepping out of the confines of the socially accepted role lead her to deep frustration and embarrassment. Mary Anne Ferguson rightly said that a woman, "...who deliberately departs from a socially approved stereotype by playing a new role – developing a new life style – unusual must pay a heavy cost in guilt, alienation, or psychosis; tendencies toward schizophrenia may be aggravated by the person's sense of divided self" (9).

Anna – Anna is a woman with artistic talent and passion for writing poetry and many of her poems have been published in literary magazines. She often questions her mother regarding

the position of women in society or why certain tasks are only meant for women but her mother, being a traditional lady, advises her to accept her limitations and surrender to the social norms. Being an alert and observant person Anna often thinks of the condition of women in society and questions the worth of the social system which is not based on gender equality. She decides early in life that she will not compromise on her dreams and self-respect for the sake of marriage and will marry a person who believes in the concept of gender equality. Her revolutionary views are often reflected in her poetry and when Vipul, one of her readers appreciates her opinions and later approaches her for marriage, she agrees as she believes that the relationship is based on equal ground. After marriage she and Vipul along with his mother moves to London and start their family life. The small circle of Indians residing in London welcomes them warmly. Vipul is an open minded person and he respects Anna's views of equality and so they often share the burden of the household work. When their children are born – a boy (Agnivesh) and a girl (Abha), Anna teaches all the household work including cooking, sewing to both of them without any discrimination to both her children. Her mother-in-law Jayaben does not appreciate it and often complains about it but Anna convinces her with her logical arguments and loving nature.

Vipul runs a small insurance business and Anna helps him out along with pursuing her passion for writing. Anna, due to her communication and social skills, soon starts earning better than Vipul. Vipul does not express his dislike openly but his male ego is hurt and he deliberately makes some extra efforts to work harder than her to prove his point. One day when Anna expresses her views regarding men helping in household work as part of their duty, Vipul feels insulted. He does not defend himself openly but from that day onward he starts helping less and less in the household work and would cut off Anna when she tries to express herself. Anna notices this change of behaviour but she does not react immediately as she is sure that with time things will improve. But things get worse day by day as none of the two want to give in. Vipul becomes more aggressive and Anna sterner in her opinions and this ultimately results into an untimely death of Vipul due to a heart attack. Anna bears the blow courageously but still she is not ready to compromise on her beliefs as deep down she knows that Vipul lost his life only due his false ego. In views of Jayita Sengupta, "There is, however, the more serious problem of male reaction to woman's empowerment...husbands of financially independent women tend to be less caring and less considerate than those with dependent wives...The source of such apparently illogical male response to the challenge

posed by women lies hidden in a profound feeling of inadequacy that is both deep rooted and pervasive among men in our country” (152).

She takes over his insurance work which is mostly dependent on the Indians residing in London but only to find a loss of business due to her liberal views which are not appreciated by the conservative Indian society of London. Being a practical minded person she convinces her mother-in-law to move back to India to re-build their lives and they all come to Mumbai to settle down.

Isha – Isha is the narrator of this novel who lives in Anandgram – an ideal residence for liberal minded people leading a life on their own terms. Isha resembles the author Kundanika Kapadia (also popularly known as ‘Ishama’) and Anandgram is a place modelled on the original Nandigram ashram established by Kundanika Kapadia where she had resided till she breathed her last. Isha lives with her husband Swarup in Anandgram. Swarup is a kind hearted, sensitive person who decides to give up a lucrative career due to his love for nature and becomes a full time farmer and botanist. Isha and Swarup are the image of an ideal couple where both husband and wife respect each other’s opinions and decisions and never try to influence each other. As Isha supports Swarup in his decision to be a farmer, Swarup is all ready to support Isha in every possible way in her passion for writing. Their relationship is based on mutual trust and respect. Swarup works hard and develops a garden and farm in Anandgram and grows organic fruits and vegetables and with its selling, the income of Anandgram increases.

Minor Women Characters

Lalita – Lalita is an educated housewife whose expectations of mutual respect in a relationship gets scattered due to her husband’s suspicious nature. Once out of trust when she shares a matter related to her attraction towards a boy during her college days, her husband Sudhir starts suspecting and physically abusing her. She is not allowed to go out of the house or to meet her family or to talk to any men without his permission and even on a small suspect, he will thrash her. Her husband often sends a peon from his office to his house on the pretext of work only to check on her. She is a victim of domestic violence and her condition becomes worse when she fails to find any support from her children or parents. Although highly educated, Lalita starts losing confidence in herself and bears it all meekly in absence of any support system. Kate Millet has aptly expressed her views regarding the male dominance in society, “What goes largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged...in our

social order, is the birthright priority whereby males rule females. Through this system a most ingenious form of “interior colonization” has been achieved. It is one which tends moreover to be sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring” (25).

Ranjana – Ranjana is married to Deepak and they have a daughter named Asha. Being middle class family, Ranjana finds it difficult to make ends meet still she is able to save some money without the knowledge of her husband Deepak who has the habit of spending lavishly especially on women. He has been in relationship with many other women including their maid and even though Ranjana is aware of this fact, she cannot take any action to prevent him due to a lack of any financial support. Once their teen age daughter Asha gets pregnant with an illegitimate child and due to lack of money Ranjana is unable to take her to the hospital for an abortion. As a result, Asha commits suicide at a tender age and Ranjana feels guilty for not being able to save her daughter. She has to bear this blow along with Deepak’s extra marital affairs mutely.

Alopa – Alopa is adventurous by nature since early age and becomes a mountaineer after taking a training of mountain climbing. She is a feminist at heart and expresses her views on gender equality openly without any hesitation. She is the only child of her parents and since early childhood she has decided to look after her parents during their old age and for this reason she will not shift to her in-law’s house after marriage and marry a person who agrees to this condition. She meets Pradeep during the mountain climbing training and when he agrees to accept her conditions, she married him. As Pradeep’s parents reside in a small village, he could easily shift with Alopa but later when Alopa does not conceive even after three years of marriage, her in-law’s start to pressurise them for a child. Alopa is not the one to give in easily and declares her decision of not having any kid as it might create an obstacle in her passion for mountains. The in-laws are orthodox and cannot accept her views and they force Pradeep to either beget a child or return all the money his father has given him to start a factory. Pradeep finds himself in a dilemma and even though Alopa assures him of financial support, he gives in to his fathers’ pressure and divorces her. Alopa bears this blow courageously and during the prolonged sickness of her mother, she looks after her with love and patience. Alopa is a modern woman who does not believe in following meaningless and orthodox rituals in the name of social and family duty and as a result she has to bear the pain of getting separated from her husband. The privileged locus of marriage for the smooth functioning of the society and security of its future has often been a sight of trouble for

women like Alopā as they can see through the loopholes of the system and raise voice against the injustice it does to a particular gender. Nelly Furman correctly analyses this system and its impact on women as following, “Marriage produces a single social unit wherein differences among individuals are seemingly dissolved under one name, the name of the father. Thus, whether one views marriage as the blissful coming together of equal voices speaking in unison, or as the site of an ongoing dialogue between individuals continuously affirming their differences, we cannot escape the structure it imposes, the patriarchal society it sustains” (76). During the later stage of life when she starts feeling lonely, she shifts to Anandgram to be in a company of open-minded people who could accept her as she is. Alopā represents the tendency of a modern woman who steps out of the threshold of her house and abandons the security of the warm nest to earn a life of respect where she could live as an autonomous and integrated being.

Bela – Bela is a dancer by profession and she marries Nishant who happens to be a painter. Initially Nishant supports her in her career but after a while Bela gets to know of his real nature in form of his frequent outburst and his ego. Before marriage he is full of praise for Bela’s dance and qualities, after marriage he starts pointing out at her faults rather bluntly without caring for her emotions. Bela finds it more and more difficult to adjust in this situation and after the birth of their children she could hardly concentrate on her career. Even Nishant’s family does not support her and Bela starts feeling frustrated. Nishant always manages to pursue his passion for painting while Bela is found lagging behind due to the household responsibilities. Nishant’s behaviour towards Bela is getting worse day by day and he is now no more interested in her dancing skills. Rather he expects her to look after the house and children and forget about her passion. Bela could not take Nishant’s ruthless behaviour anymore and decides to divorce him. After her divorce she opens a dance school and gains much fame.

Bela represents the dilemma of the modern woman who although might surmount any peak of success in her professional life, she is always judged by her abilities to run her household well. She is constantly balancing between her aspirations and social duties and her task becomes burdensome when she fails to gain any support from her partner or family. Bela’s decision to get separated from her husband indicates her courage and uncompromising spirit as being a modern woman, she does not want to be only a housewife but to earn name and fame through her talent as a dancer. As result, she does not hesitate to go against the social norms and seek divorce to fulfil her dreams.

Jayaben – Jayaben is Anna's mother-in-law and her character undergoes a transformation during the course of the novel due to her ability to adjust with the changing time. She is a kind hearted lady who respected the individuality of a person. In case of her son Vipul and daughter-in-law Anna too she often disagrees with them on certain matters but she will only express herself softly without trying to interfere in their life. After spending many years under the influence of a patriarchal society, Jayaben sometimes expresses her displeasure for modern outlook and life style but being an educated person she makes efforts to understand the viewpoint of the younger generation. She also recalls her own past where once when she had started earning more than her husband, he reacted rather rudely and had asked her to give up her job. But her son's untimely death comes as a big blow and she could not resist her anger and blames Anna responsible for it. Still when Anna puts forward her opinions in this matter pertaining Vipul's ego and rage, Jayaben realizes her mistake and agrees to support Anna during the hard time ahead. When Anna proposes to move to India, she readily agrees and later at Anandgram she is content to find her own space and privacy to be able to pursue her desires. Through Jayaben's character the writer expresses her hope that one can get rid of suppressing thoughts and start a new journey towards a fulfilling life at any point of time. Jayaben's positive outlook and ability to accept change makes her a memorable character of the novel.

Salina – Salina is Vasudha's daughter-in-law Kamal's niece who comes to stay with them for a while and during this short stay a special bond is established between the two. Salina is autonomous by nature and her courage can be witnessed in her decision to disown her own father who is responsible for her mother's untimely death and her decision to take her mother's name as her middle name. She studies in college and is an active social worker. She along with her friend Krishnan and their group is involved in many social welfare activities, particularly for the tribal. Even at a young age, Salina's heart is burning with the desire to contribute her lot for creating a better and just society. She is full of courage and poise and during the entire episode of the procession to bring justice to the rape victim, Salina takes a pivotal role and fights hard till the end. Her character is much ahead of the time and she is an image of a futuristic woman – confident, brave, aware of her rights and her abilities and is ready to fight against any injustice at personal or social level.

Sushila – Sushila is Mitra's cousin who represents the archetypal image of a woman in society. She is not much educated and seeks fulfilment in her house and her roles as a wife and mother. She is not concerned about any of the women's issues and looks down upon

Mitra or Anna when they talk of social reform. She has accepted the rules of the patriarchal society without questioning them and is content with the quality of her life. She often visits Anandgram to buy Mitra's carpets to earn her share of profit and when other women at the ashram make fun of her conservative views, she argues against them in favour of her point of views. Sushila represents majority of the women folks of the society who are least bothered about the outside world or their own deteriorating position and try to adjust to the accepted social tradition without any protest accepting them as universal laws for women.

2.4 Limitations of the Narrative and Character Portrayal

The novel gained much popularity and became a benchmark of Gujarati literature within a very short period of time. Along with that it bestowed much fame upon the writer Kundanika Kapadia who became a role model for many successor writers, especially women writers. However, when examined critically, one may come across certain loose ends particularly about three aspects – character portrayal, representation of family and social units and the writer's ideology or approach towards them. As I intend to analyse the novel with special focus on its women characters, I must take into consideration these loose holes which I happen to notice during my research process and I would like to discuss some of them below.

a) Character portrayal

The characters, both male and female, are portrayed in black and white – over positive images of women while men are presented in dark shades, especially the women's personality traits are presented in extremes – either they are too naive and passive or over rebellious and active. For example, Vasudha, Vasanti, Lalita are presented as bearers of traditionally imposed ideology and victims of patriarchy while Sumitra, Anna, Alopa are their counter images who prefer to take an active role and fight for their rightful position in the society presenting the image of modern women. Although all women, including the central character Vasudha, are aware of the unjust social rules and discrimination against women, majority of them hardly make any efforts to bring any positive changes in their lives and have always blamed others (especially men) and social system (patriarchy) for their situation and when they take any steps for their welfare, it always ends up in abandoning family and society and finding solace in an imaginary Utopian system which is too good to believe. R. K. Gupta aptly points out this tendency being applied by modern Indian writers as following, "Moreover, feminism in modern Indian literature has often tended to be too descriptive and not sufficiently critical. While it has effectively played with the surface, it has not adequately

provided insight into the deep social and psychological factors which produce the environment in which exploitation of women becomes possible. Sometimes man is blamed too easily as the ubiquitous villain to whom can be traced back all the suffering and oppression of women...” (188)

The central character Vasudha, despite being aware of her rights, bears all the injustice meekly for many years without uttering a single word of protest and then one fine day she suddenly seems to awaken resulting into her declaration of retirement from her household duties. When she fails to seek any support from her husband in this regard, she abandons her family to shift to Anandgram where she is able to lead a life of respect denied to her within her own family. Vasudha, who is otherwise a very sensitive and caring person, fails to sympathise with her husband or Foiba, who are under the influence of patriarchal social system, or make efforts to change their mindset gradually with compassion. Even her relationship with her husband or children look artificial as they are mostly based on the socially designed roles and lacks any real bonding compared to her relationship with other women in the novel. Even her so called courage and confidence which never really came up during her stay within her own family is mainly based on her circumstances – at Anandgram her qualities blossom which were suppressed within her own house. She hardly takes any initiative to improve the condition of women in society (she could not take stand for Sumitra or Ranjana when they required her support) and later she joins the procession supporting the rape victim, in fact leads it, when supported by others. In the words of Urvashi Pandya,

...by self creating demolishing situations in her thoughts and then proclaiming herself as a feminist, the protagonist of '*Saat Pagla Aakashma*' till she reaches 'Vanprasthashram' does not make any firm efforts to bring any positive changes as per her desire in the family or surroundings. She spends most of her life suffering from 'self-pity' complaining or opposing instead of trying to indulge in self-respect or self-confidence. Nothing concrete emerges out of this. If Vasudha had taken creative and assertive steps with the help of her skills and limitations, she would have brought revolution in her own house and would have become an example for the helpless, confused and suffering women of the society. (my tran.; 59)

Even the man-woman relationship are presented in extreme shades just like the women characters where either they are too ideal (Isha and Swarup) or complete failure without any tinge of reality. Most of the couple lack mutual trust where the husband always fails to perform his duties towards his wife. For example, Vasudha's husband Vyomesh who is a dutiful husband otherwise as he looks after the needs of all the family members and treats Vasudha well and provides her with all the comforts suddenly turns into a negative person as per Vasudha's point of view as for a sensitive person like Vasudha, Vyomesh, who is a practical minded person, falls short due to his natural inability to express his emotions. Even when Vasudha all of a sudden declares retirement from family life without considering Vyomesh, his reaction is highlighted as harsh and selfish without taking into consideration his position or feelings. In other cases of Vasanti and Anna the same strategy has been repeated where the husbands suddenly cease supporting their wives due to a small conflict (Satish does not approve of Vasanti's joining music school and Vipul stops supporting Anna in household work when she starts earning more than him) and the wives are presented as victims of patriarchy bearing all the injustice mutely. The wives too become stubborn as they do not want to compromise on their dreams but their rigidity is a matter of pride while the husbands' behaviour is always driven out of selfish motives. Neither the husbands nor the wives show maturity by trying to patch up with the others through discussion. Women characters so easily play victim card due to their gender without considering the fact that they are doing injustice to men or misjudging them at times. As Adrienne Rich rightly pointed out the impact of such mentality of women as, "Is there a connection between this state of mind – the Cold War mentality, the attribution of all our problems to an external enemy – and a form of feminism so focused on male evil and female victimization that it, too, allows for no differences among women, men, places, times, cultures, conditions, classes, movements" (221)?

Men's point of view is completely missing or presented in a sarcastic manner with quick and generalized judgement, male characters and their actions or decisions are analyzed with a critical eye without considering the logic behind it. The reality that even a man too can be a victim of patriarchy which has a strong hold on the psyche of the members of the society of both the gender and his decisions driven out of the value system imbibed in him is completely skipped. The images of the majority of women presented are the image of the so called 'modern' woman – educated, liberal minded and well-aware of their rights. However, some women characters appear in the novel who represent the traditional archetypal image of women in our society and they are created to prove upper hand of the so called modern

women of the novel. For example, the writer presents Sushila (Mitra's cousin) as a stereotype woman of the society and makes fun of her without making efforts to understand her circumstances which made a conservative woman out of her. Sushila's thoughts or action are all scrutinized under the critical eye of a progressive woman writer without considering the fact that majority of the women of the then society or even today in 21st century lead such life due to binding social norms and their ignorance of their rights or acceptance of their roles without questions is simply labelled as orthodox or typical without analysing their situation or position. The attitude of the writer, in this sense, resembles to that of a 'token woman' (4) – a term coined by Adrienne Rich in her famous essay "What Does a Woman Need to Know?". According to Rich, a 'token woman' is a woman with certain privileges like education, better career opportunities and means to gain respect and recognition gaining an upper hand over many underprivileged women with a sense of superiority. Rich, in her essay, warns such woman to beware of this misleading notion as the power she enjoys is offered by masculine society on a condition that "...they use it to maintain things as they are, and that they essentially "think like men" (3). Pointing towards the inadequacy of this so called privileged position for women Rich states, "Its most immediate contradiction is that, while it seems to offer the individual token woman a means to realize her creativity, to influence the course of events, it also, by exacting of her certain kinds of behaviour and style, acts to blur her outsider's vision, which could be her real source of power and vision. Losing her outsider's vision, she loses her insight which both binds her to other women and affirms her in herself. Tokenism essentially demands that the token deny her identification with women as a group, especially with women less privileged than she... Women unlike herself – poor women, women of color, waitresses, secretaries, housewives in the supermarket, prostitutes, older women – become invisible to her; they may represent too acutely what she has escaped or wished to flee" (4). The result is instead of fighting for one another, women start neglecting and accusing other women (the so called underprivileged section) just like the case of First World and Third World Feminism.

The writer is falling into the same trap of the agenda set by patriarchal mentality that is to ridicule anything which does not fall in line with their own thoughts and presenting their women characters in extreme shades which are not based on their experience but with the motif to prove a point. Many of the women characters seem to repeat the mistakes done by men in form of their extreme decisions of going against the family system to prove their point and belief in feminism without considering the point that "...feminism is fundamentally about

transforming patriarchal culture and society. Women should not have to choose between work and motherhood, respect and sexual pleasure. Feminism requires expanding the options available to women, so they can be truly self determining..." (Snyder-Hall 256) and by judging the choices of other women the female characters are repeating the same line of thought as applied by First World Feminists for the Third World Women. Chandra Talpade Mohanty has appropriately indicated the narrow mentality of the first world feminists towards the third world women without considering the social circumstances in the following words, "...women are defined consistently as the victims of male control – the "sexually oppressed." Although it is true that the potential of male violence against women circumscribes and elucidates their social position to a certain extent, defining women as archetypal victims freezes them into "objects-who-defend-themselves," men into "subjects-who-perpetrate-violence,"... Sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be forged in concrete, historical and political practice and analysis" (399).

b) Family and social units

Both family unit and social system are harshly attacked along with the system of marriage which is under close scrutiny and presented as obstacle for women's progress and freedom. The family unit is presented as a site of trouble where a woman has to bear all the injustice and sacrifice her rights and only when she steps out of the system by breaking all the boundaries of family and society, she is capable of gaining respect and power. The writer discards any possibility of improvement in the system except abandoning them and striving for an imaginary system (almost Utopian) which is a far sighted dream of humanity. The writer more or less suggests escape mechanism through her characters and situations instead of encouraging a more practical solution in form of striving for improvement by facing challenges.

c) Writer's approach

Kundanika Kapadia acquires a rebellious tone and radical attitude for her novel to prove a certain ideology or '-ism' without considering the real or practical aspects of it. For Kapadia anything outside the zone of her point of view is problematic and she tries to justify her narration or characters' decisions by fair means or foul to establish an ultimate justice without questioning that from whose point of view justice is restored and at times her efforts at character portrayal or narration seem to be created out of her strong desire for an ideal society and are almost imposed upon the readers which are appreciated by certain readers

initially as they help them in experiencing ‘catharsis’ and ‘purgation’ but when examined closely, they seem artificial and too obligatory as they are not based on any first hand experience. Once again referring to Urvashi Pandy in this matter who said, “There is nothing wrong if any ‘-ism’ is proven through a text. But it must be proved naturally. Until the information related to the ‘-ism’ does not get associated with the author’s own consciousness or it doesn’t convert into his/her ‘knowledge’ after a personal experience, it would be a disadvantage on the part of the author to lose patience and create a text based on second hand information...” (my tran.; 45)

Kapadia is easily falling in the trap many male writers have created through her radical approach by challenging every norm of patriarchy just for the sake of proving her feminist ideology. According to Alice Echols Kapadia intends to "provocative critiques of the family, marriage, love, normative heterosexuality, and rape," the lynchpins of male dominance (3-4).

Even her feminist ideologies lack any depth or deep consideration as they are nurtured by a second hand knowledge and quick understanding of an amateur writer who uses extreme tactics like bearing everything meekly first and then revolt and run away suddenly to seek imaginary world of desire which in reality is called escapism. When Kundanika Kapadia’s sister and the English translator of this book Kunjbala Anthony was approached to express her views regarding the novel during an interview, she assessed it in the following words, “...as far the book I felt it was badly written – factual errors, plagiarism, too much repetition, it was put together as it was published as a serial without any editing. Editing can make or break a book so to speak... William said it seemed Gujarati novel writing was immature, had a long way to become mature” (2020).

During the same interview she specified that after translating the book into English she along with her husband and co-translator William Anthony approached Virago publishers, London which denied to publish it after seeking advice from Kali for Women in India as they found it quite similar to the theme and concepts presented in a famous American novel *The Women’s Room* (1977) by Marilyn French. Later the same publication house (Navbharat Sahitya Mandir) which has published the original accepted the manuscript of the English translation and published it in 1994 (2020). When I compared these two books – thematic aspects, character portrayal, the writers’ approach and how these books were received in their own respective culture, I can find many similarities.

Just like *Saat Pagla Aakashma*, *The Women's Room* gained instant popularity and is considered the most influential novels by an American woman writer advocating the concepts of modern feminism (second wave feminism of 1960s). Similar to the Gujarati novel, *The Women's Room* met severe criticism from readers and critics for its pessimistic approach still it became an international best seller. If we compare the thematic aspects or characters, there are multiple similarities. For example, the central characters of both the novels – Vasudha and Mira Ward respectively – are submissive by nature and lead a life of housewives in a conventional marriage. Both of them realize their deteriorating positions through the lives of the other women in their surroundings. As Vasudha chooses to shift to Anandgram to discover her strength and lead an independent life, Mira joins Harvard University to pursue higher studies to fulfil her dream of becoming a teacher. Both the novels presented their women characters in dynamic manner with an aim to lead them to a more fulfilling and independent life while the male characters lacked any depth and their point of view is completely discarded indicating the writers' biased approach towards them. Of course Kapadia has 'Indianized' the situations and characters to make them more appealing to Gujarati readers but both the writers seem to work on the same line of thought to prove their feminist ideologies (rather radical feminism) through their characters.

2.5 Women in Translation: Representation/Misrepresentation

Passage 1.

In chapter three Foiba is giving instructions to Vasudha to pay a visit to the family of a relative where death has occurred recently and how she is supposed to dress up for the same

‘વસુધા, મામીની બહેનની દીકરી ગુજરી ગઈ, સાલબ્યું તે? સાંજે સાદડીમાં જઈ આવજે. પેલી સફેદ નવી સાડી લીધી છે તે પહેરજે. અને કાનની બુટી પહેરીને ન જતી. જુવાન મરણમાં આવુ બધુ સારું ન લાગે. પણ મંગલસુત્ર ભલે રહ્યું. એનો વાંધો નહીં. પછી આવે ત્યારે કંદોઈને ત્યાંથી થોડો માવો લેતી આવજે. મોહનથાળ બનાવવાનો છે, યાદ છે ને?’ (19)

In English rendering it reads:

‘Vasudha, so-and-so has died, you must visit the family. Wear that white sari, don't wear the earrings. She died young, it will look bad if you wear jewellery, but of course, keep your

mangalsutra on; on the way back buy condensed milk for the sweets you have to make tomorrow.’ (13)

While the original refers to the relationship of the family with the person who died along with the custom of *સાદરી* ‘*sadri*’ where people gather on a particular day to mourn the death, the translation replaced these details with ‘so-and-so’ for relationship status and ‘visit’ to replace *સાદરી* ‘*sadri*’. Indian society is a complex web of multiple layers of relationship people share with one another. The concept of big joint family in India has been practiced for centuries and as a result not only close relatives but also distant relations are considered seriously when it comes to following social customs on different occasions like birth, death, wedding etc. In India people understand the concepts of relations with distant family members and could segregate them easily. While in Western countries the modern social and family system is more focused on the close relatives. The social ideology of both the worlds are poles apart and so the original ‘*મામીની બહેનની દીકરી*’ (maternal aunt’s sister’s daughter) has been replaced with ‘so-and-so’ to avoid any confusion for a Western reader. Even the custom of *સાદરી* ‘*sadri*’ has been replaced with a simple visit to the family of dead taking away the cultural connotation associated with this ritual. Foiba’s comments related to the colour of the clothes worn (white) or eliminating jewellery is all associated with the traditional values which if read by a Western reader with different sets of values, might be completely missed out. The constraint of ideology along with the culture of the receiving system has played its role in the selection of equivalent words. In Lefevere’s words, “The way they understand themselves and their culture is one of the factors that may influence the way in which they translate” (“Translation/History” 14).

Even earlier in the same chapter Foiba is seen to be instructing Vasudha related to what religion to be followed. As Vasudha has been married into a Jain family, it is expected of her to follow Jainism after marriage and to visit only Jain temple. Her parental side worships Shrinathji as they follow Vaishnav sect but after marriage Vasudha is compelled to change her religious beliefs. This complexity regarding various religions and different sects of them (within Hindu religions there are multiple sects like Brahmin, Vaishnav, Swaminaraya, Shaiva etc. as per their beliefs in different Hindu Gods; even here the number is in multiple) is difficult for a foreign reader to understand and so in translation the original

‘Shrinathji’ (15) becomes ‘Hindu Gods’ (11) following the different concept of difference of religious ideology.

Passage 2.

In the same chapter Vasudha is contemplating about how her life has been transformed completely after marriage and this thought leads her to a larger picture of the general practice where a bride is advised by her family and relatives in regard to the performance of her duties towards her in-laws and win their heart with her self-less love and sacrifice. Vasudha, being an alert person, questions the authenticity of such practice for a bride who shared a complete load of this responsibility while her in-laws are not expected to reciprocate her efforts through their kindness and love. Vasudha’s thoughts in the original are as following

દીકરીને હંમેશાં પ્રેમ ને સેવાથી સાસરીયાનું મન જીતી લેવાની શિખામણ અપાય છે, કોઈ કેમ પતિને, સાસુને, નણંદને કહેતુ નહી હોય કે બે કુમળાચરણ પોતની કેડી છોડી આ વાટે આવ્યાં છે, તેના મારગે કાંટા ન વેરાય તે જોજો! (16)

In English translation it reads:

A daughter is always told to win the heart of her husband’s family by love and service. Why doesn’t anyone tell the husband, the mother-in-law, the sister-in-law, to make the new bride’s life easier, happier? (11)

The original creates an image of a newlywed bride and her departure from her parent’s house in a beautiful manner by comparing her journey ‘as if two delicate feet leaving its path’ and; later how her in-laws should look after her comfort as to make sure that ‘no thorn could pierce those feet’. The image is a very artistic way to portrait a new bride’s journey from her parents’ to her in-laws’ but when transferred to English, the image becomes rather dry with a matter of fact expressions – ‘to make the new bride’s life easier, happier?’ The translators have taken into consideration the Western Universe of Discourse and prevailing ideology and made these changes to suit it in this particular case.

The excerpt also refers to the advice a daughter is given while leaving for her in-law’s house by her parents regarding her general conduct and qualities like compassion, complete obedience and selflessness which she is expected to exhibit to make the life of her husband

and in-laws more comfortable. This advice is a typical ritual of Indian culture and its references can be found in innumerable texts (the most famous one is in Kalidasa's *Abhigyanashakuntalam* where Rishi Kanva is advising Shakuntala regarding the same and it has been so deeply imbibed in our culture that it became an inseparable part of our tradition) and movies along with the following of this practice in real life for the past many centuries. This practice hints at the deep rooted patriarchal notion which completely neglects the psychological pressure it puts on the bride by such extreme expectations on her and the fear of negligence on her part. Sudhir Kakar voices the working of such unjust practice on women and their lives as follows, "An Indian girl's entry into the married state and the new world of social relations within her husband's family thus does not take place under auspicious psychological conditions. In spite of her inner ideals and conscious resolutions to be a good wife and an exemplary daughter-in-law, a bride comes into her husband's family with a tremendous burden of anxiety and nostalgia,..." (62)

Here Vasudha is questioning the age old social system and her rebuke comes out clearly. Although the translation is in line with the original, these culture specific references fail to create a desired impact in the English translation, even futile at times. While sharing her experience of translating the text into English, Kunjbala Anthony said, "What was in Gujarati sounded silly in English" (2020). Constraints of different social ideology and poetics are responsible for the loss of desired impact in this case.

Passage 3.

In chapter five when the members of Anandgram were discussing about the condition of women after hearing Vasudha's contempt, two of the members Anna and Mitra gave examples from history and mythology respectively to prove their points. The first example is about a famous freedom fighter Sardar Patel. When he was a practicing lawyer, once during a court session he received the news of his wife's untimely demise while undergoing a surgery. He exhibited poise by not reacting immediately and continued with the session and broke the news only after the court was adjourned. Although there is no mention of his name in the original, through the reference to this example it is quite clear who it is meant for. The point Anna was trying to make is that being a man, Sardar Patel could easily get over his emotions and continue with his duty for which he has been appreciated. But a woman could not even think of doing that out of the socially accepted behaviour and if she had done so, she would have been harshly criticised. The second example talks of Draupadi and her questioning the

elders in the court openly when she was insulted by Dushashana in form of her 'Vastraharan' from the epic Mahabharata. Mitra, while stating this example, makes a point that just like Draupadi, women should not meekly accept any injustice done to them and must question the society in this regard.

At this point I would like to mention that the traditional image endorsed for Indian women has always been that of Sita for very obvious reasons while the character of Draupadi, who exhibits qualities like independent spirit and consciousness towards her rights throughout the epic, has always been highlighted as being exploited by men with reference to the above episode. Commenting about the politics of identity building for Indian woman Romila Thapar says in her lecture 'Selecting Identities from the Past', "What is sometimes constructed as community, tradition and identity, with the claim of historical legitimacy, is often invalidated by history. So when we look at the past for an identity, and we do this regularly in many walks of life, the search has to be realistic. I would like to argue that it is not feasible for us to maintain that there was in the early historical past a single identity for the Indian woman, as is frequently maintained, and that this became what we call the traditional identity" (qtd. in Khattar and Sukul 441).

In the English translation both these examples were skipped. These examples are used by Kapadia to enhance the impact of the point she is trying to prove. The translators' decision to exclude them might be influenced by the constraint of poetics as these examples are rooted in Indian history and mythology, and if rewritten in English, require an explanatory notes, at least for Western readers and the second example, in particular, might call for a detailed note on the story and the episode of 'Draupadi's Vastraharan' so to save themselves from this trouble, the translators might have decided to skip them altogether.

In the same chapter a large portion of the original version which reflects about the purpose behind the establishment of Anandgram as well as the condition of plenty of underprivileged people in India who have been mutely bearing exploitation for centuries has been skipped. The portion basically deals with the concept of sacrifice which has been hailed high in India but on the contrary has been misused to exploit the poor and the weak for personal or political benefits. Through this context, the writer wants to prove a point that women also have been exploited in the name of sacrifice and the glory associated with this concept. This concept is typical to Indian mindset and is used in various context – religious (there is a reference to Shri Arvind Ghosh), social, political so the translators may have

decided to skip it as it might not make much sense to a Western reader. The constraints of ideology and poetics have clearly played their part in this decision.

Passage 4.

In chapter fourteen Vasanti narrated an incident of her attending a musical concert of a famous classical singer Kesarbai Kerkar and on listening to the melodious singing of Kesarbai, Vasanti got overwhelmed and developed a desire to learn classical music. Describing her experience of listening to Kesarbai, Vasanti said,

એક વાર સૂરસિંગાર સંસ્થાના કાર્યક્રમમાં કેસરબાઈ કેરકર ગાવાનાં હતા ત્યારે તે ગયેલી. સવારનો સમય હતો. પહેલા લલિત, પછી ભૈરવી ઠુમરી... બાબુલ મોરા, નૈહર છૂટો રી જાય... શી ગજબ એ ગાયકી હતી! સ્વરને ક્યાં થોભાવવો, કેટલો ખેંચવો, ક્યાં આંદોલિત કરવો, કેવી રીતે પ્રભાવકારક બનાવવો, એનું શુ અદ્ભુત જ્ઞાન હતું ! વાસંતી સ્તબ્ધ થઈ ગઈ. આખા શ્રોતવૃંદમાં અપેક્ષાની શાંતિ ઝળુંબી રહી. તે બાબુલ ઘર આપના... મેં ચલી પિયા કે દેશ... દરેક જણને પોતાની વિધવિધ વિદાયની ઘડીઓ સાંભરી આવી. પાંપણ પર મોતી લટકી રહ્યાં. હવા સ્થિર થઈ ગઈ. ખંડનું અજવાળું વિષાદથી મેલું થઈ ગયું. નજર દૂર, બહુ દૂર ચાલી ગઈ. સામે સ્ટેજ ન રહ્યું, ગાયિકા ન રહી, સાજ ને સાજિંદાઓ ન રહ્યા, રહી કેવળ વિદાયની ક્ષણ, આંસુના તારે બઝેલી, અજ્ઞાતનો ઉંબરો વળોટવાની ક્ષણ, હજારોની હાજરી વચ્ચે પુણું એકલતાની ક્ષણ... (128)

In English translation it reads:

Once they went to a performance by a famous vocalist Kesarbai Kerkar. First she sang Raag Lalit, then Todi, and finally the famous Bhairavi thumri, the song of farewell...

The entire gathering was silent; everyone remembered moments of some particular farewell. There were tears in many eyes and the lights in the hall seemed to dim. The mind travelled to a distant land, as if there was no stage, no singer, no orchestra. There was only the moment of goodbye, the crossing of the unknown threshold, a complete aloneness in the midst of thousands. (88)

The above excerpt talks about various ‘Raags’ of Indian classical music which are mentioned in the translation but without any footnotes. Apart from this, there is a description

of the singer singing a particular song which indicates the departure of a daughter from her parents' house to her in-laws after marriage. While the original makes it clear through the mentioning of the song, the translation has skipped the song and only mentioned the word 'farewell' in place of the original word વિદાય 'vidai' which has multiple connotations including departure for journey, the ultimate departure in form of death etc. and is likely to confuse the readers. In India the departure of a daughter from her parents' house after marriage is an emotional event and the entire scene of the heartbreaking wails of the bride and her relatives brings tears to the eyes of everyone present. In folk and regional Indian literature (both poetry and prose), this episode has been narrated artistically (depiction of the famous scene of Shakuntala's departure from rishi Kanva's ashram for Dushyant's palace in Kalidasa's *Abhigyanashakuntalam*; in Gujarati literature too there are a number of poems or songs available related to this theme – *Kanya Viday* poem by Anil Joshi, *Vadamna* by Ramnik Agrawal along with a number of folk songs depicting similar theme). The incidence of વિદાય 'vidai' has deeply rooted cultural connection and Indian readers could easily associate with it. But readers who belong to Western culture having no such tradition, might not be able to understand the cultural significance of this ritual and so the translators decided to skip the details of the song and used a general term 'farewell' instead. There is a mention of the expressions 'crossing of the unknown threshold' with reference to a newlywed bride crossing the threshold of her husband's house which is unfamiliar to her. The emotions of fear and nervousness are associated with this. But the translation does not clarify on any of these things and thus the entire implication of the event is missed. The constraint of poetics has played its part here.

Kundanika Kapadia has made use of artistic expressions at certain points above like પાંપણ પર મોતી લટકી રહ્યાં...ખંડનું અજવાળું વિશાદ થી મેલુ થઈ ગયું '*papan par moti latki raha...Khanda nu ajwadu vishaad thi melu thai gayu.*' to enhance the impact of the moments of વિદાય 'vidai'. The word મોતી '*moti*' signifies 'tears' while the second line implies that the brightly lit hall looked dull due to the grief felt by the audience. Although the translators have done an apt translation still it looks matter of fact comparatively – 'There were tears in many eyes and the lights in the hall seemed to dim.' The constraints of the Universe of Discourse could have been applied well to retain an artistic effect of the original in this case.

Passage 5.

While revealing the life story of Sumitra, the writer is reflecting upon the different concepts of love for man and woman in chapter nineteen where in the original text Kundanika Kapadia refers to the bodily desires and sex openly and how man and woman react differently to it. According to her, man and woman both have this desire but man has no physical bondages after it while a woman has to bear much due to it.

પુરુષને પ્રેમની જરૂર નથી હોતી? હોય છે, પણ એ તેની જરૂરિયાતનો થોડો અમથો ભાગ છે... તેને ‘સેક્સ’ની જરૂર હોય છે. પણ એ એક ‘બાયોલોજીકલ ટ્રેજેડી’ છે કે દેહસંબંધનું પુરુષના દેહ પર પછી કોઈ બંધન રહેતું નથી, એ સંબંધનું પરિણામ ફક્ત સ્ત્રીના શરીરને જ બાંધે છે. (173)

In translation the entire section refereing to sexual aspects in relationship have been skipped. There might be multiple reasons for this – the translators’ personal hesitation or the prevailing ideology where a Western reader might not be able to accept that an Indian regional writer, woman that too, could so openly write about ‘sex’ in her novel. The ideology of Western reader might not make him/her accept this fact related to Indian writer due to their concept of India and its people so the translators might have decided not to mention it in translation.

Passage 6.

In chapter twenty three at two places the translators have given an additional explanation for the original expressions to make the points clear for the readers not familiar with Indian cultural context.

i) After the death of Anna’s husband Vipul, the Indians living in London expected Anna to behave like a widow, especially dress up like a widow preferring plain, light colour clothes without any jewellery or make up. To express this point Kapadia has used the expression વિધવાના શોકાકુલ વેશમાં ‘*vidhvana shokakul veshma*’ (217) while the translators have carried forward the same expression but with an explanation regarding the Indian belief in the following words – “in the traditional role of a widow, by not wearing a red bindi and coloured clothes” (147). The original word શોકાકુલ ‘*shokakul*’ meaning expressing grief has been explained by the translators for the Western readers who may not be familiar with the customs associated with widowhood in India.

ii) The second example is related to how the outlook of people changed towards Anna due to her liberal thinking related to the status of women and the exploiting customs of the society to degrade their position. When the Indians residing in London started criticizing her for not following the custom of widowhood, Anna could not bear it and once during a party her outburst in form of strong criticism of the narrow, double standard social norms of people can be witnessed. The original writer has expressed the change in the attitude of people towards Anna as they distanced themselves from her after this event which affected her business and financial status and at one point the writer says that how men started looking at her in a different way. To express this, the writer uses the expression **ପୁରୁଷୋନି ତେନା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେନି દષ્ટિ બદલાવા લାગી**. '*purushoni tena pratyeni drashti badlava lagi*' (220) which clearly hints at how men would detest a liberal minded woman openly but secretly would approach a lonely widow in society as an easy prey. In the English translation, the translators chose to express it as following – 'Men equated her liberated views with a loosening of sexual morality, and looked at her in a different light' (149). While the original gives a subtle insinuation at the changing mindset of men towards a lonely woman and leaves the rest for the readers to interpret, the translation takes away this opportunity from the readers to understand and deduce the situation. Also the original does not hint at Anna's loose morality after the death of Vipul which has been translators' own assumption of the situation. The expressions 'men...looked at her in a different light' could also have another possible meaning of men looking at her more respectfully as an open-minded individual which is quite possible in Western society but to be in line with the original interpretation, the translators chose to explain this point with an addition to the original to make the readers realize the actual situation based on an ideology prevailing in India.

In both the cases the constraint of ideology has played its part. The Indian and the Western ideology in the matters pertaining widowhood is dissimilar. In the same manner the ideology related to a liberal minded woman in both the societies is different and to avoid any kind of misinterpretations, the translators have decided to provide an explanation in both these cases instead of leaving it to the readers to decipher.

Passage 7.

In chapter twenty-three and twenty-four many passages have been skipped by the translators, especially the ones which express either the sexual aspects of love and romance

or the original writer's views on the materialistic side of the Western culture. Once Anna's British friend Rob invited her to a party which ultimately turned into a free play of wife swapping and sex. The entire section describing the details of these is skipped.

Later in the next chapter, Kapadia introspects about the condition of women in the West where it is believed that women enjoy more freedom and share equal status with men but when observed closely, it is seen that Western women also face discrimination and are under constant pressure of looking attractive. They are under constant fear of being abandoned by their husbands for a better looking and younger partner and so they make efforts to look beautiful all the time. Majority of the paragraphs describing Kapadia's views on this matter are omitted in translation. While referring to the condition of women in Western countries, Kapadia gives references to feminist writers like Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan etc. in a sarcastic tone that even after education and awareness about the feminist ideology advocated by many Western writers, these women live under the illusion of freedom but in reality are more chained by the concepts of skin deep beauty to charm their male counterparts for better lifestyle. These references do not appear in translation at all which is quite surprising and debilitating for it detracts from the novel's overall purpose and impact.

The reason for this omission could be the personal ideology of the translators and the poetics of the receptive culture. The translators who happen to reside in Australia might have considered that such negative aspects of Western culture being discussed in so much of detail may offend a Western reader. Also the poetics of Western culture may not allow a Western reader to accept such accusations directly and so keeping in mind these aspects, the translators might have taken this decision to skip such sections. Another reason could be that a Western reader may feel offended to find a Gujarati woman writer criticizing the Western society pointing out at its flaws so openly resulting into the omission of these references in its English rendering.

Passage 8.

At two places in chapter thirty-seven and thirty-nine certain expressions have been added to the original to explain a point by the translators. In chapter thirty-seven, when Vasudha, Mitra, Anna, Alope Salina and others were discussing about how to teach a lesson to the culprit who committed the rape, Anna suggested to send a deputation directly to the Prime Minister. On hearing her, Alope commented

‘એથી કાંઈ વળશે નહિ; દિલ્હીમાં સ્ત્રીઓ સામેના ગુના સૌથી વધુ બને છે.’ (377)

Its English rendering reads as following:

‘No, that’s no good. The Prime Minister is a woman, and still the largest number of reported crimes against women happen in New Delhi.’ Alopa said. (242)

In translation the mention of the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi is made which is not present in the original. To emphasis the point, the translators might have thought to include this detail, especially for foreign readers.

In chapter thirty-nine, the description of Mitra’s death in hospital and the outburst after that has been given. The description of Mitra’s death rituals is as following

એક સ્ત્રીના હાથે જ મિત્રાના અગ્નિસંસ્કાર થયા. (397)

In English translation it is carried forward as:

Contrary to custom, the pyre was lit by a woman. (254)

Here the Hindu custom of burning the pyre of a death person by only a male member of the family (husband, son, son-in-law, nephew etc.) is referred to. This is a very well-know ritual where in Hinduism only a male member is ascribed to perform these rituals and women are not allowed to do so as per the scriptures for the salvation of the soul. The original only states the fact considering it obvious that the readers would be familiar with this ritual but the translators had added an expression ‘Contrary to custom’ as here Mitra’s death ritual is performed by a woman. A Western reader may be unfamiliar with the traditional Indian custom and so the translators decided to clarify on this matter.

In the first example, translators’ personal ideology might have inspired them to add details related to the Prime Minister to put more emphasis on the severity of crime against women in India while in the second the constrains of poetics might have inspired them to explain the point related to the culture specific rituals for the better understanding of a foreign readers.

Passage 9.

Kundanika Kapadia has made use of a number of famous Gujarati proverbs in her novel for various situations. Let us analyse the technique the translators have acquired to deal with them below

1) Once Foiba expressed her contempt towards the rapidly changing times where women are not only receiving education but also have become active in various professions. On hearing her views, Vasudha contemplated on the upbringing of women where since childhood they have been trained to make adjustments without complain and here she uses a famous Hindi proverb કમ ખાના અને ગમ ખાના ‘*Kum Khana or Gum Khana*’ (27). The meaning of the proverb implies ‘Eat less to be healthy and bear pain for family harmony.’ In English translation it has been carried as ‘eat less food and restrain the tongue’ (18) using the indirect meaning of ગમ ખાના ‘*Gum Khana*’ in the sense of acceptance without complaint. The translators have tried to naturalize the essence of the proverb this way in the case of the lack of any such idioms in English language and the constraint of Universe of Discourse has been dealt with in an impressive way.

2) One day Vasudha and Sumitra had a discussion on how a woman’s entire life is changed once she gets married – her name, religion, routine, habits and if a woman re-marries after divorce or death of her husband then people criticise her and say એક ભવ માં બે ભવ કર્યા ‘*ek bhav ma be bhav karya*’ (68). This is a typical Indian belief which focuses on leading a life pre-decided by the society and scriptures according to which a person is allowed to create just one world in one incarnation to lead an ideal life. In case of a woman, the conditions are more stringent in the matters pertaining her marriage where she is not allowed to re-marry and if she does so it is considered as forming two worlds within one life and it is not appreciated. The word ભવ ‘*bhav*’ has multiple connotations like world, life, incarnation, birth etc. and is used in various contexts. The original line is used with reference to a woman re-marrying and going against social customs which is detested in general. The translators have translated it as – If a woman marries again people say, in one life she has had two lives. And in this country that’s thought to be a bad thing (45). Here they have taken liberty of adding another line to explain the concept of ભવ ‘*bhav*’ to deal with the constraint of poetics of the target language/culture to familiarise it to a TL reader.

3) In chapter nine Sumitra comes to Vasudha's house for shelter after abandoning her family as they constantly pressurised her for marriage, and in no time she mixes up with everyone. Vasudha also finds a companion in form of a friend and enjoys her company. But after a few days Vyomesh and Foiba started inquiring about her and for how long she is to stay with them. Foiba is reluctant to get rid of her and she even warns Vasudha against keeping Sumitra in the house as she might pose danger to her happy married life. To indicate the danger, she makes use of a famous Indian proverb as following –

પોતાના પગ પર કુહાડો શું કામ મારે છે? (85)

In translation it reads:

Why are you cutting your own throat... (57)

The proverb used in the original is a typical expression implying to a person who poses danger to him/herself. This proverb and similar type of proverb is available in almost all languages. In its translation, the translators have tried to naturalize it as per the poetics of the Western culture which has no such expression available and for that they have considered the constraint of Universe of Discourse. They have successfully conveyed the meaning by using different expressions keeping intact the sense of the original proverb.

In the same episode, Foiba uses a metaphor for Sumitra રુમઝુમ ઝંઝર જેવી છોકરી છે! 'rumjhum zhanja rjevi chokri che' (85)! to indicate Sumitra's youthful beauty. The original writer makes use of a figure of speech – metaphor while the translators have simply expressed the meaning of the metaphor in a matter of fact way as – 'She is very attractive and charming' (57). The translation is in line with the original but still the charm of the original figure of speech is somehow lost making the translation dull at some point. The reasons could be the different sets of metaphors used in Indian and Western contexts forming the poetics of the languages. In India various jewelleries are used to indicate the beauty of a woman, especially the use of ઝંઝર 'zhanjar' meaning anklet is considered very attractive due to the melodious sound it produces. Due to the different concepts of jewellery in India and Western countries where such jewellery as anklet is not worn normally, the translators have decided to skip the metaphor and only mention the essence of it for the better understanding of readers.

4) In chapter twelve Ranjana comes to Vasudha one afternoon to seek monetary help urgently but Vasudha could not help her as she does not have money. Ranjana requests her to get it from Vyomesh and on seeing Ranjana's pathetic condition, she agrees. At night when Vasudha tries to talk to Vyomesh in this regard, he loses his temper and starts criticizing her for making promises without his permission. He also tries to convince her of how people befool others to get easy money. Vasudha tries to explain her point but Vyomesh cuts her off saying that he is the bread winner of the family and she has no right to waste his hard earned money on a friend who is not even sure to return it. While arguing with her, Vyomesh uses a famous Gujarati proverb regarding women – બૈરાની બુદ્ધિ પગની પાનીએ '*Bairani buddhi pagani panie*' (115) which means that women do not have any sense. The sarcasm of the proverb is even enhanced with the use of a word બૈરા '*baira*' which is a derogatory term used for women. The translation of this line is 'women are stupid' (79) which makes full sense still the cultural connotation and the sarcasm is lost. In the original this comment looks sharp and insulting but when refrained in English it loses the sharpness of the original. The constraints of ideology and poetics have played their part in the rewriting.

General Observations

Many typical expressions like હાથ હાથ '*Hai Hai*' or onomatopoeia like હુડુડુ '*Hududu*' (13) were skipped in translation. Some typical Indian cuisines have been rewritten differently to suit the Western readers – ખાખરા '*khakhara*' (30) as 'crisp bread' (21), ઉકાળો '*ukado*' (30) as 'ginger tea' (21), મગ પાલક નુ શાક '*mag palak nu shak*' (54) as 'curry' and ભાખરી '*bhakhari*' as 'pancakes' (54). A typical expression describing a child's innocence as it plays around the tree – ઝાડ ફરતી ફુદરડી ફરતી હતી '*jhad farti fudardi farti hati*' (34) as 'climbing the trees' (23) altering the entire meaning. In the original text various references to sexual desires and pleasures appear where at one place it has been expressed as ઈચ્છાનો ઘેઘુર રંગ '*itchaa no gheghur rang*' (26) and ઘેઘુર આંખોનો લાલ રંગ '*gheghur ankhono lal rang*' (33) have been translated as 'intoxicated colour of desire' (17) and 'desire' (22). While the original although subtly, clearly indicates the bodily pleasure, the translation simply converts them into the word 'desire' which has multiple connotations leading to misreading by readers.

2.6 Analysis of Translator's methodology

After the detailed analysis of the original and its English translation I can say that the English translation of this famous text fails to create a desired impact on the readers due to a number of factors. First of all the translation seems to have been completed in a hurry without giving much consideration to the motif of the original writer, skipping the portions which are either linguistically challenging or are rooted in Indian history or culture. The language of the original is quite artistic and rich with the use of many literary devices exhibiting the author's command over the language and her skills at narrating while the translation looks quite flat and matter of fact devoid of any use of artistic device to justify the efforts of the original author. The special apprehensions of Kapadia pertaining nature, condition of women in society, rise of feminism and its impact on women in India as well as in the West have been either skipped or mentioned in brief affecting the quality of translation at linguistic and stylistic levels. Lefevere aptly mentions his views on how a text should be handled by a translator as following

But the translator's most essential duty, the one that crowns all others, is to try to reproduce the effect the author produced, in every instance... Whoever wants to translate goes into debt. To repay it he must pay the same sum but not in the same currency. If he is unable to render the image he should replace it with a thought... If he is less energetic he should be more harmonious and he should be richer if he is less precise. Does he foresee that he will have to weaken his author in a certain passage? Let him strengthen that author in another. Let him give back below what he takes away above. Let him compensate everywhere while staying as close as possible to the nature of the original in all its parts... His merit must be determined on the basis of the totality of his work and the overall effect produced by every passage. ("Translation/History" 38, 39)

Unfortunately the translators of this novel were not able to pay their debt to the original author as they have actually created an abridged version of the original. Quite a large portion has been omitted from the original in the translation, particularly on the occasions of the description of nature, Indian values, description of sexuality and comments on Western culture and society, especially the condition of women in the West as compared to their

counterparts in India. Kundanika Kapadia was an ardent lover of nature and through her central character Vasudha and her inclination towards nature, the author has artistically described the beauty and magnitude of nature in her novel at length. The entire settlement of Anandgram is based on the concepts of closeness to nature and imbibing Indian values. But in translation much of it has been omitted taking away the entire charm of the narration along with the idea of the original author's deep concern for nature.

Even there are various references to male and female sexuality in Indian as well as Western context that are found missing in the translation. The question here is why this censorship has occurred while rendering it into English which is considered to be a more advanced target language. Are the translators prudish or Victorian in their morality? Or did they do it deliberately with the aim of creating a different image of Gujarati literature and the writer which is yet considered incapable of talking about these sensitive issues in such a direct manner?

In chapters twenty-three and twenty-four Kapadia indulges into the description of the feminist ideology advocated by pioneers like Simone de Beauvoir or Betty Friedan at length in context to the condition of women in the West. It is normally believed that women enjoy better position in the First World countries compared to their Third World counterparts. But when observed closely, we realize that the Western women too face exploitation and injustice. While in India women are exploited in the name of religion, culture and social norms, in the West women, despite education and awareness, live under the constant pressure of the false notions of physical beauty and charm. In spite of better opportunities of education and progress, they live under fear of losing their male counterparts if they do not make efforts to look young, attractive and desirable. Even the concept of materialistic luxury prevailing in the West without any moral sense, particularly in the matter of loose sexual morality, has been strongly criticised by the original author. The translation has excluded most of the paragraphs which describe these sensitive issues.

The possible reason could be the translators' own ideology regarding what should be and should not be included in a literary text. Even the translation seems to be meant for the Western reader and so in order not to disparage them with the criticism of their cultural and social system, the translators might have decided to leave out any such references without considering the fact that they are doing injustice to the original writer and the text which is highly recommended as a feminist text showing deep concerns for women and their issues.

The injustice becomes even more strong and visible in this case where a woman translator is doing it to a woman writer, her own sister as a matter of fact. When questioned regarding the possible readers of the translation and the reasons for so much omission, the translator Kunjbala Anthony said, “When I first read it I thought it was worth translating for Western readers. As we sat down to do it in English, it did not seem so good as we started looking at it in fine details. Bill (William Anthony) felt it was totally unsophisticated. What was in Gujarati sounded silly in English. We had huge arguments over many points and we swore never to do it again. I had thought it would be fun...We didn't have women reader in India in mind when doing it...Omissions were made with the permission of the author, in fact we went through the whole translation together. They were made for the reasons like a lot of repetition, plagiarism, factual errors etc.” (2020)

Many culture-specific words, terms or references have been skipped in majority of the cases while at times the subtle hints given by the original author meant for the readers to read between the lines have been directly put forward in translation. Despite the linguistic and cultural differences of the source and the target languages, the translators could have sensibly used the hermeneutics or etymology of the Gujarati language and culture to make more sense of the original author and her intentions to create a richer version of English translation. And in this particular case, one of the translators’ (Kunjbala) mother tongue happens to be Gujarati and she also had a direct access to the original author Kundanika Kapadia who was her elder sister in case of clarification on any ambiguity pertaining language or culture. There are other such examples where translation is undertaken by a close relative or is done by a contemporary writer/translator with the permission of the author and a note worthy job has been resulted like in case of Gujarati literature, a stalwart literary figure Jhaverchand Meghani’s stories based on folklore of Saurashtra have been translated by his son Vinod Meghani as *A Nobel Heritage*, *The Shade Crimson* and *A Ruby Shattered* (collections of select stories from *Saurashtrani Rasdhar* in 5 volumes), Himanshi Shelat’s award winning short-story collection *Andhari Galima Safed Tapka* has also been translated by her husband Vinod Meghani, Ila Arab Mehta’s novel *Vaad* or Joseph Macwan’s novel *Angaliyat* along with Munshi’s Patan Trilogy have all been translated by contemporary translator Rita Kothari, in Bengali Mahasweta Devi’s famous short-stories – *Daupadi* and *Standayini* have been translated brilliantly by Gayatri Spivak or in case of some famous literary works which received multiple translations – the French novel *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Faaubert received around nineteen translations in English. The hermeneutics could have posed some

serious challenges, particularly in the case where the translator and the writer belong to a different culture but still the translations have come out really well. While in the case of the present novel, the original writer and translator (Kunjibala) not just belong to the same cultural roots but are family, misinterpretations have taken place at number of places leading to misreading or biased interpretation on the part of the readers of the translation. After analysing the original and its English translation closely, it is no more a matter of surprise that compared to the fame of original novel and the impact it created on the readers, the translation fell short at creating any deep impression on the minds of the readers who might approach the novel due to its critical appeal to get an insight into the Gujarati canon, particularly the women's canon.

2.7 Concluding Remarks

To conclude we can say that a new era of women's writing began with the publication of *Saat Pagla Aakashma* and Kundanika Kapadia takes the helm through her brilliant literary talent to introduce radical feminism into the sphere of Gujarati literature and inspire many writers to come. Her female characters exhibit a new level of confidence and their never compromising attitude in the matter of their self-respect and freedom has inspired a novel perception towards the women of our society and in the matter pertaining the depiction of women in literature. However, the writer often takes an extreme stand to prove her point affecting the narration and character portrayal still she must get her share of credit for her artistic skills and for being a pioneer in the field of initiating the feminist movement in Gujarati literature.

At the same time, it is sad to note that the English rendering of this famous novel does not live up to its expectations of creating the same impact on the minds of the readers in target language. The English translation of the novel *Seven Steps in the Sky* falls short at various levels like linguistic, stylistic and hermeneutical. It fails to reproduce the brilliant artistic effect of the original as the translation hardly moves beyond the thematic aspect and does not carry the semiotic and values of the original culture. At many points misrepresentation and ambiguity have taken place (along with omissions of a large amount of paragraphs) and the translators had not bothered to deal with them through their creative talent. The translation has been undertaken keeping in mind only the Western readers and often the translators' efforts are visible to manipulate the original for the sake of acceptance by the target culture. Due to these factors the translation seems dreary and flat and could not

attract any critical acclamation in the target culture. The most unfortunate part is that the translators could have taken their translation of this important Gujarati novel by a woman novelist to an altogether new level as they share a family bond with the original writer but they ended up producing a dull replica, completely devoid of the spark of the original due to their biased view points of the Indian regional literature and writers – Kunjbala Anthony mentioned in her interview that they do not think much of this novel as she and William found it quite repetitive and amateur leading to a lot of editing, with the permission of the writer, of course (2020). As a result the English translation of this popular Gujarati novel ended up transforming it into an ordinary tale of women suffering to seek justice in this unjust world. The actual motif of Kapadia in writing the story of Vasudha for advocating women's right and demanding positive change in their condition is somehow lost in the process of translation. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's comments on the role of a translator in her famous essay 'The Politics of Translation' are worth mentioning here, "I can agree that it is not bodies of meaning that are transferred in translation. And from the ground of that agreement I want to consider the role played by language for the *agent*, the person who acts, even though intention is not fully present to itself. The task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the workings of gendered agency" (397). Thus we can say that the translation, in this particular case, has gained less and lost more in its rewriting process. And it is a matter of surprise that during these twenty-six years since the publication of this translation, no efforts are made to re-translate this remarkable text into English to establish the original novel's prestige into target culture.

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