Chapter IV

A Study in Comparison
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The word novel in English is a truncation of the Italian word novella from the Latin novellus, meaning "new." ‘The literary values of a novel are often determined by a conjunction of subliminal and synchronous forces which operate independently of the author, investing the surface story with a deeper social significance. A novel then rises to the level of myth, and its characters become symbols of the consciousness of their age.’ 01 Encyclopedia Americana emphasizes on contemporariness and societal parameter of the novel, ‘Novel is the strongest literary medium as it depicts internal texture of society, culture and life in a serious imitation of reality.’ 2 It is reflection of the society in the real sense of the term. Other section of literary creations such as poems, plays, essays etc. can not be compared with novels though they describe something of the society. Novel emphasizes individualism. ‘The novelist presents all kinds of activities of the people and how these are provoked by social, cultural environment’. 03 Thus a novelist presents life in whole. Therefore literature is called the mirror of society. The society or the contemporary milieu is at length and expansively reflected in literature. Thus literature is largely depended on society. Yet it is not simply mirrored reflection of the society. It is like a modified and beautified version of reality. It is like photographic art of Photoshop software of computer. It has artistic and aesthetic elements in it filled by the writer. The writer makes it colourful with the power of his imagination, aesthetic sense and embellished language. But ultimately the writer is the spokesperson of the age he is living in.
Social Realities of Life:

Dhiruben and Namita, both the novelists find their themes quite naturally from the surrounding social realities of life. Love, marriage, conjugal life, contemporary social pattern, condition of woman etc. have special place in their novels. In Aandhali Gali Dhiruben describes an unmarried woman’s longing for marriage at the age of forty four and her passionate efforts to find a life-partner. Due to her widower father she decided to live a maiden life at an early stage of her youth. She was not interested in love or marriage in her youth. But at the age of forty five, all of a sudden, the companionship of the happy couple arouses the feeling of love and marriage in Kundan’s heart. But then it is too late. Secondly she comes to know about the illicit relations of her deceased father with a woman. She is shocked to know this revelation. All her efforts for love and marriage prove futile and she is again thrown into the same life of loneliness-‘aandhali gali’- blind alley. She has to live the same dull and lonely life. This short novel emphasizes the companionship of people in life. Human life is not a blessing in isolation. It is lived with the friends, relatives, family members and the life partner in society.

Dhiruben presents the social issue psychologically and realistically. Kadambarini Maa focuses on a woman’s efforts to achieve independent status and self respect and her severe conflict in married life. She is supported by the confident, strong mother-in-law. The timid, typical wife Kadambari bears the cruelties of her husband. But her spirited mother-in-law awakens self-reliance and confidence in her. In the end Kadambari
emerges as a new woman ready to take on the struggles of life. *Hutashan* primarily throws light on conjugal life. It presents two couples and their life; Rohit-Vatsala and Ashish-Shephali. It shows how a woman like Vatsala has to suffer the agony of fire in life and a happy family like heaven is turned into hell due to a bad daughter-in-law. In *Aagantuk* Dhiruben describes a situation, ‘What can happen if a Sanyasi (recluse) comes back to worldly life after fifteen years of renunciation?’ Is he welcomed by his so called cultured and well-settled family members? The selfish brothers Arnav and Ashutosh and their cunning wives show a cold shoulder to him. Finally Ishaan, the protagonist has to go back to Vrindavan to live the life of a recluse.

Namita also has social realities, human relations, man-woman relationship, love and sex at core in her novels. She also delineates marriage, conjugal life, contemporary social condition etc. in her novels. *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* is a tale of an old woman with talent and guts, who does not fall prey to the difficult circumstances but with her foresightedness carves a home for herself and her grand daughter-Gudiya. She steals a green marble slab and a few pebbles and turns them into a deity and herself into a holy mother. *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* is a satire on present-day India. Because such things can happen only in India where religion is the first priority and more attention is paid to religion than the nation. Namita Gokhale has skillfully strung different episodes like beads of a rosary to portray the seamier side of Indian life and morality. The novel also touches many aspects of life like blind faith, corruption, romance and human courage. The novel also deals with the theme of love and death. Gudiya falls in love with an ordinary boy named Kalki. She gets married with him and she has to suffer in life.
Namita presents contemporary upper middle class man-a neo rich class in *Paro*. It has relevance with contemporary society of Delhi and Mumbai. The novel reflects the higher strata of society-the affluent business class and their idle-rich counterparts, the working middle class and the world of legal professional, politician and service cadres. The novel deals with the theme of human predicament exhibiting the human values and man-woman relationship of contemporary society. The couples like Paro-Mr.BR and Priya–Suresh show the conjugal life of upper middle class people of metro cities. Namita said, “*Delhi is basically a small town with large pretensions. In Paro I was making fun of Delhi's socialites.*” Thus *Paro* has apparent relevance with contemporary society of Delhi. The novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion* is set in the cities of Mumbai and Delhi. The time of the novel is post Indian Independence period of seventies.

Namita exposes the follies and trivialities of the upper middle class people. These so called sophisticated people are snobbish and fake. Their conversation reflects their areas of interest and superficial way of life: Namita elucidates:

*But Marlon Brando is too Sa-a-xy, yaar. She would reply, drawing out word in a way that held me spellbound…. She did not perceive the shame or furtiveness of sex. She talked of mating her bitch and the complexities of her own sexual life with same directness and with same degree of involvement. Matter-of-factly, she told me the length of each of her lovers’ organs. She made me laugh.*
Paro and Priya represent the so called modern women who go to any length to satisfy their desires. The novel is set within the backdrop of metropolitan life of Delhi and Mumbai. The situation is very disappointing, women are exploited. They feel no shame in having physical relations with many men. Paro has affairs with many men but in reality she longs for real love and happiness. People have most formal relations and they feel lonely even among the crowd of the friends and acquaintances. The modern man has all means of comforts and luxuries yet he feels a vacuum in his life. Namita represents them:

*I sat alone at home; it was a Sunday morning. I realized suddenly that I was quite alone in the world. I had nobody, but nobody, who loved me, liked me, or even cared for me. I had a host of acquaintances- my kitty party friends, all of whom despised me with the same intensity with which they disliked each other.*

*A Himalayan Love Story* is a haunting novel about romantic loss and fatalism, It is Namita Gokhale’s rare gift of seeing and recording the epic in ordinary lives. Namita delineates the hill people and their simple ways of life with complete realistic touch. It is story of fierce sexuality and unrequited love. The unhappy married life of Parvati and Lalit focuses on need of matured conjugal life. Healthy man-woman relationship is the foundation to live a happy human life. Namita also endeavours to convey that the marriages based on gotras and horoscopes only do not necessarily lead to blissful conjugal life: Mukul loved Parvati but her uncle Hiranand Joshi rejected him only because he was a Khasiya Brahmin. Hiranand Joshi belonged to superior sub-caste of Brahmin. So considering their superiority, he did not want miscegenation.
The novel is a satire on contemporary society that does not care for the bond of hearts of two young lovers and still think of superiority of sub-castes. The novel focuses on the issue of caste superiority among the Brahmins in hills and Kumaon district. Mukul preserves a grudge against his patron Hiranand master throughout his life:

_Someone in your family needed to teach you lot a lesson!_  
_Caste, caste, caste—but then, I suppose there isn’t much left for you to be proud of! My wife isn’t a Brahmin. Oh no, not even a Nandhoti Brahmin! No, she is Burmese, half Burmese and half English. The same English who once ruled you! And what happened to your pride before them? Don’t tell me I know!’**  

In this novel, she also describes with knack how the narrow and congested environment of big joint families do not provide mismatches a chance to improve. Parvati’s efforts to improve the relations with her husband prove futile.

_Shakuntala: The Play of Memory_, is a tale of Kumaoni Brahmin girl named Shakuntala. Though its milieu is medieval, the narration and approach is realistic. It shows a woman who has always craved for travelling and knowledge. As a girl, she is eager to see the world, to wander with the freedom and has thirst for glimpse of new lands, people, ideas etc... The novel deals with the theme of a woman’s desire for freedom. It also discusses of philosophy of birth and rebirth. The novel basically deals with feministic perspectives. Woman and her age-old condition in society are at centre in it. With the passing of time everything has changed. The life style of the society also has changed. This novel
presents the condition of woman in backdrop of the medieval time. The condition of a woman in the changed-modern world is almost the same one. The plight of woman has not changed with the passing of the time.

*The Book of Shadows* is a story with supernatural touch but not a typical ghost story. Basically it is a psychological presentation of the mind of a woman with an unexpected tormenting attack in life. Part ghost story, part erotic romance, *The Book of Shadows* investigates the nature of reality, love and faith. It is a ghost story without a ghost. It is story of a tormented and tortured psychic. It is simply reflection of Rachita’s illusiory mind. It describes a world of fiction through the illusions of a character that is obsessed by past-horrible acid attack. Namita excels in creating a selfless character of Rachita even the spirit behind the curtain is the another self of Rachita. It presents the internal and the external character of Rachita who can be called a psychological patient.

Psychological approach and social realism is a striking similarity in both these writers. Namita portrays the characters like Rachita, Shakuntala, Priya, Paro etc. with a psychological touch likewise Dhiruben’s Kundan, Vatsala and Kadambari are also depicted with same technique and angle.

A salient variation found between these two women novelists is that Namita depicts sex and sometime there is an overdose of sex in her novels. Dhiruben has complete absence of it in her novels. Of course the character of Kundan in *Aandhali Gali* longs for love and happiness of married life. There is a desire for sexual pleasure in her character but it is completely hidden and not exposed. Namita has many descriptions of sexual intercourse and love-making. The scenes are erotic and sometimes has overtone of sex. In Dhiruben it is difficult to find even a scene of kiss. Dhiruben with all respect follows the trends and traditions of Gujarati
literature whereas Namita becomes the pioneer of the sexually frank genre of writing in Indian English novel which made Shobha De famous in the following years. Ferheiz Bharucha interprets this bold and inhibited portrayal to: Reject a culturally imposed sexual repression, Working class girls’ ambition to liberate themselves, relentless pursuit of hedonism-eating/ drinking/orgies and Aesthetic, philosophy and psychological dimension. \(^8\) Whereas Ira Pande considers *Paro* as a novel of protest and credits it as a memorable contribution to Indo Anglian Writing. \(^9\)

**Presentation of Contemporary society:**

Both women writers make satire on contemporary milieu. Another prominent resemblance is that both have presented their contemporary culture in their novels. Dhiruben mostly focuses on Mumbai city and the way of life of the people living in Mumbai. A realistic picture of the existing world is found in both. Namita Gokhale shows what it is and not what it should be. But Dhiruben Patel sometimes tries to present what it should be.

Modern man rushes to gods for fulfilment of his desires. Even today he also has superstitious beliefs. Dhiruben describes the crowd at religious places: *Ena e chaahera pachhi Haji Aliman jova malya, Siddhi Vinayak pase lambi lambi kataroman ubhela dekhaya....... Koi pan dev mali jay to chale; jarak potani vat kane nakhvi chhe!* \(^{10}\) (…The same faces were seen at Haji Ali, the same people were seen standing in long queues at Siddhi Vinayak temple…any god will do to express the desire of heart!)
The innocent and superstitious people of India are very easily deceived. They believe in any Sadhu and any fraudulent person can become their Guru. The best example of such exposition is R.K. Narayan’s novel, *Guide*. Similarly Ishan, the protagonist in *Aagantuk* has a chance to deceive the people quite easily; they worship him; heap food and other offering upon him. Dhiruben makes a scathing satire on such so called Swamijis and Babas who cheat the distressed superstitious people. The media operation to expose such babas in big cities of India in March, 2010 is the noticeable example of it.

Both throw light on greed for power in religious institutes and ashrams. Pratapgiri in *Aagantuk* and Pandit Kailash Shastri in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* are best example of it. It is a satire on over religiosity of people of present-day India. Namita points out how in India a small marble slab with some flowers becomes a temple and people rush there in the name of faith and are cheated by the so called saints like Ammi. We find thousands of such small tombs, and temples on the side of roads proving obstruction to vehicles and traffic. When this old woman dies, she becomes a great saint. It is a scathing satire on the present day society who run to such babas and mais for peace and blessings. Gudiya describes it in her own words:

*We were no longer poor, the few coins rattling in the thali which had been mother’s had magnetized immeasurable amount of wealth to our temple. Devotees and well-wishers vied with each other in piety and generosity.*

11
Focus on Matrimonial Affairs and Conjugal life:

Both the novelists focus on conjugal life. In *Aandhali Gali* Dhiruben focuses on the conjugal life of a person keeping in centre the two points: the married life of Paresh-Shubhangi and the unfulfilled desire of Kundan to get married. At the age of forty five the love story of Paresh arouses the feeling of love and marriage in Kundan and she becomes conscious about marriage and longs for married life. After many years spent in loneliness, now, Kundan all of a sudden, thinks of the marriage influenced by the loving and blissful conjugal life of Paresh–Shubhangi. Dhiruben praises marriage as a bond of love where husband and wife become one and share all the joys and sorrows of life together. It is noted:

*Bija ek manasno bhar jivanbhar vendharvo, tena sukhe sukhi thavun, tena dukhe dukhi thavun te kai nanisoni vat nathi. Agadh prem vina avo bojo sha mate koie pan uthavvo joie?*  

(It is not a less significant matter to work laboriously for a person for the whole life…. to feel happy on his/her happiness…. to suffer with him/her for his/her misery.)

In *Kadambarini Maa* the main focus is on the married life of Anil and Kadambari. In between, the novelist has touched the married life of Vijaya and Girdharilal. Kadambari is not happy with Anil, a drunkard who lacks good virtues. Kadambari is just a sex-satisfying toy for him.

*Hutashan* also depicts Ashish’s efforts to live a happy married life with a strange woman like Shephali. It shows a mother’s supreme sacrifice
for the happiness for her son. The novel primarily focuses on conjugal life. It presents two couples and their life; Rohit-Vatsala and Ashish-Shephali. Vatsala is a perfect woman. She has a blissful happy married life of twenty five years with her husband. Namita describes the silver jubilee celebration of their wedding anniversary, “Aa kain lagna nathi, pachis varsa pahela thayela lagnani ujavani chhe” (13) (This is not a marriage; it is a celebration of the marriage organized twenty five years ago.) But on the contrary, the conjugal life of Ashish is very distressful. He hasn’t had even twenty five days of happy married life. Within two-three months of marriage he decides to get divorce.

Namita’s Paro presents the married life of Paro with B.R. and others. Another couple, i.e. Priya and Suresh is also striving to live a happy married life. The Himalayan Love Story deals with Parvati and Lalit’s failure in marriage. Thus Dhiruben’s Kadambarini Maa, Aandhali Gali, Hutashan and Namita’s Paro, The Himalayan Love Story and Gods, Graves and Grandmother also delineate matrimonial affairs and conjugal life from various angles. In Shakunta the protagonist Shakuntala describes her happy conjugal life in her early days of marriage:

There were no boundaries between us, no boundaries to our joy. We would sport and rest and sleep, awakening to return once more to our love-games. Playing hide-and-seek with our kisses, we would find our selves lost in our reflections, each in the other, and then in the reflections of the reflections. This category of kiss, Srijan told me, was known as the pratibimba, or the mirror, and it reflected the true philosophy of love. 14
Autobiographical elements; a striking dissimilarity:

Namita has used her own experiences for the character of Rachita. The character of Rachita in *The Book of Shadows* is modelled on the author herself. She is intelligent, articulate, lonely and afflicted by great pain and loss like the author herself. Namita Gokhale admits:

*When I was writing *The Book of Shadows*, I didn’t realize that this was a book about pain. It’s only after I finished the book that I saw its purpose. In the book, Rachita, the connecting link of the story, feels a lot of anger. I had lost my husband some years ago. And although on the surface I looked peaceful, there was a lot of anger inside me. That’s what I fuelled Rachita with. It was the kind of anger that makes you demand: ‘Why should this happen to me?’ I felt angry with my husband. Why did he have to die? I do not know how I worked it out while writing the novel. But, in the end, I felt more sorted out, exorcised of a lot of pain. It was cathartic, in that sense.*

15

She further throws light on inspiration and origin of the novel,

*The Book of Shadows* came to me in a strange way. My husband and I lived in an old house in the hills. It was a house we both fell in love with. But we felt that there was something strange, some presence that was not entirely at peace with itself. I based my novel on that house……. I began writing these diaries by a British missionary. …… This is how the novel began.*

16
Namita Gokhale saw death very closely. She also barely survived of uterus cancer. Many of her near and dear succumbed to death before her eyes. Consequently we see a hovering dance of death in her novels. She hardly spares any of her characters from death. This is the reflection of such tragic events occurred in her life. But unlike Namita, Dhiruben has not such reflections of her own life in her novels. Hardly any character of Dhiruben dies in such a manner.

**Satire on Contemporary Society:**

Namita focuses on superstitious nature of the people. It is satire on some age-old superstitious concepts of our society. Indian society is pestered with false beliefs, superstitions, and anything related to God attains faith and those who do not respect the holiness are punished. In *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, Namita emphasizes the innocence of the Indians regarding God; anything irreligious can also occupy a saintly place in the disguise of the name of god or goddess. Namita has portrayed all the subtleties with exactness. She has narrated such trivialities in the novel. As we know there are hundreds of such so called babas, swamis, and mais in Indian religious world. Ammi is a former kothewali but with her tact, dramatic gestures and good voice quality she becomes ‘Mai’ and achieves abundant prosperity. Some chance incidents make her a miraculous woman and an illiterate cunning old lady becomes a pious saint. The following narration points out superstitious mentality of our people:

*Meanwhile, all kinds of fantastic stories and rumours began circulating, none of them as improbable as the*
real story of her life. It was whispered that she was a hundred years old, that she knew magical spells that could change the sex of an unborn baby, that she had ordered the execution of Shambhu and Mangoo as part of a ritual sacrifice.  

The fraudulent lady presents herself as a powerful miraculous woman, “It’s all right, Lila, ‘grandmother replied soothingly, without a trace of irritation. ‘I have many siddhis, and these things do not have the power to affect me.” Lila and Pandit Kailash Shastri are the representatives of this superstitious class of Indian milieu. Thus the novel is a mocking satire on such over religiosity of innocent devotees and sarcastic criticism of such fraudulent religious leaders.

Namita also discloses the hypocrisy of people. In *The Himalayan Love Story* Parvati is disappointed to see her mother’s illicit relations with their tenant. Her widow mother is seen in the arms of their neighbour, “My world was shattered. People were not as they appeared. There was another life behind their masks.” Both novelists make satire on contemporary social hypocrisy, superstitions etc.

In *Shakuntala*, Namita makes a satire on the then caste system of varna dharma observed even during wars. This is even today prevalent in rural India. Even today we first identify ourselves as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya… then Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi and so on. We hardly prefer to be identified as Bharatiya. Namita comments on such age old caste discrimination of Indian society in *Shakuntala*:
The other travellers maintained a courteous distance. They would not eat with us, for the caste rules of the varna dharma forbade them from dining with mlechhas and impure foreigners. ‘I can not understand the ways of your people,’ Nearchus complained. ‘Even in battle, they continue to cook separately, each soldier tending to his own fire pot for fear of caste pollution. Who can win a war like that?’ 20

Namita’s women in Paro symbolize the women of affluent artificial class of metropolitan cities of India. ‘Theirs is a world earned through sex, women are unwilling to let the affluence slip out of their hand. Their entire existence depends on their eternal glamour. Wine, jewels, food are expedient to their success. It is mere affluence they have been chasing. They are not exploited ones-they exploit others through sex.’ 21

A striking Contrast: An Overdose of Sex in Namita; not a glimpse of it found in Dhiruben:

Namita has an overdose of sex in her novels that is completely absent in Dhiruben’s novels. Almost all the novels of Namita have descriptions of sex and sexual intercourse. Various erotic orgies and sexual intercourses are described freely in her novels. Paro created a stir by its frankness in the early 80s, and pioneered the sexually frank genre which made Shobha De famous. Priya, the protagonist narrates her sexual gatherings with B.R.:
I would meet B.R. almost every evening.......We would copulate with a love that was both an urgent and tender; he would examine every pore and crevice of my body with the wonder of the tender of a treasure.......  

Priya has many sexual gathering with B.R. The narrations are very erotic:

Very gently, he stroked my hair. He undid my plait and let it lie loose about my shoulders... ...his hand slid softly down the front of my blouse and began stroking my breast. I pretended to be so lost in the music as not to have noticed....... The feeling spread. He led me back to the bedroom and took me there.  

Almost all protagonists of Namita have sexual relations with more than one partner except Rachita. A.G. Khan comments on Paro, ‘Sex in the life of Priya and Paro is a full-time vocation-sole cause of their existence. Every moment of their life, toilet, beauty parlour, cookery and so on are preparations for sexual triumph making themselves irresistible!’

Emphasize on Shelter-‘Home’:

After food and clothes, Roof-Shelter-house or home is the third prominent and basic requirement of the human beings. Home has direct relation with emotions. A home is made of love, faith and sentiments. It is throbbing with human emotions. That’s why it is called ‘the end of the world’ means after any long journey or stay finally man longs for his/ her
home. In Dhiruben and Namita all characters seem to be in search of a ‘Home’ where life is lived happily, joyfully and peacefully. In a real home life becomes blessing with love and affection and it is lived with freedom and faith. Priya, Shakuntala, Parvati, Mukul, Gudiya, Shubhangi, Paresh, Kundan, Ishan, Vatsala, Kadambari, Vijaya all these characters desire for such a ‘happy home’. But all of them are not fortunate to have such shelter-‘Home’.

**Myth and legends:**

Both women writers use Indian myths and legends to present their issues and characters effectively. Dhiruben’s novels have references of mythology and other Sanskrit scriptures. Trishanku, Abhimanyu, Duryodhan and Gandhari are the fine examples of it. Dhiruben has cited some allusions from Mythology. To present the exact situation of Ishan she has mentioned the character of Trishanku. Some other examples are of Abhimanyu and Vishwamitra. She compares the temptations of the world with the hasty death of Abhimanyu in *Mahabharta*. Ishan feels that who will help him in such condition. ‘*Kyo Viswamitra aavine aa Trishanku mate srushtini rachna karshe?*’ (Who will be a Vishwamitra to create a world for this Trishanku?) Vishwamitra is a mythological character from the *Ramayana*. He was a great saint. The Character of Trisahnku is chosen to illustrate the exact condition of Ishan.

Namita’s *Shakuntala* is full of such well-known myths from *Puranas*, *Vedas* and references of great Sanskrit poets and their works. The description of the ritual of the rod of Visvvasasu is wonderful. The newly wed couple had to observe Brahmacharya for three nights in those
days. The women of the house used to place a rod in the middle of the marital couch on wedding night:

> When I asked what it was, the womenfolk laughed knowingly. ‘This is the rod of Visvavasu, the lusty Gandharva who claims the wives of well-born men’ they told me. We kept the tri-ratra vrata, and suffered Visvavasu in our lives. For three nights as the moon waxed we observed the vow of continence with which a true marriage must begin.\(^{26}\)

The other descriptions of the incidents of Shankarachrya’s visit to Mandana Mishra and the parrot’s twittering in Sanskrit and Yajnavalkya’s discourse with Gargi and Janak make the novel throbbing with the rich treasure of Indian myths. Shankaracharya’s famous debate on sex with Bharati and the incidents of Lord Vishnu’s explanation to Narad of Maya are marvelous. It also throws light on Namita’s deep knowledge of Indian *Puranas* and other holy scriptures.

**Indianness of the novelists:**

India has a rich heritage of Samskaras and culture. Of course with the passage of time they were abused and the condition turned on reverse. Parents, teachers and even guests are considered god in Indian culture. Such a great heritage lost its importance and some convention and traditions became social evils. Indian Woman has respect for her husband and considers him his god and bears all his treatment in the name of ‘Pati Patrmeshwara’. A husband is supposed to take care of his wife. He has to
protect her. It is his duty to complete all the requirements of his wife and to make her happy.

Priya, the protagonist, in *Paro* has a quarrel with her husband Suresh and they are separated for a short period of time. But she repents and as an Indian wife she is desirous to go back to her husband. She feels, “I am an Indian woman,’ I told myself, ‘and for me my husband is my God.’ So I got down to telephoning him...”

The descriptions of the types of Marriages in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* by Pandit Kailash Shastri depict the significance of love-marriage. He explains the eight forms of marriages described in Sanskrit. They are the Brahma, the Daiva, the Prajapatya, the Arsa, the Gandharva, the Asura, the Paisacha and Rakshasa. Pandit emphasizes on the best one among them:

> Of these, the Gandharva vivah, choosing of a partner between two individuals for the consideration of love, was the most precious to Kama deva, the God of Love.....Gandharva vivah is an old-fashioned Sanskrit word which means ‘love marriage.....’

Namita sings songs of love and mentions the finest pairs of Hindu gods and goddesses narrated in Sanskrit Literature and Hindu mythology. They are Lord Vishnu and Lakshmi; Shiva and Parvati; the Sun and his wife Chhaya; the Moon and his wife Rohini; Indra and Sati; Vashistha and Arundhati; Rama and Sita and Krishna and Rukmani.
Sanskrit: a base for all Indian Literatures:

Sanskrit is base of all Indian literatures irrespective of language and region. *Shreemad Bhagvad Geeta, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Vedas* and other Indian Sanskrit scriptures are the main source of all Indian literatures. Indian philosophy, vision of life and spiritual concepts are reflected in novels of both these women writers. Various references and allusions of Ram, Krishna, Shiva and many other Hindu gods and goddesses and characters from such scriptures are there in their works.

Some vratas and ceremonies are common for an Indian virgin’s aspirations for her future married life. The worship of basil for a good husband is an example of it in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*. Some of rituals in weddings are common all over India barring the language or caste or creed. Sapta padi, four aims of married life, the concept of Gruhlaxmi, Gruhasthi life etc. are the base of Indian culture and our way of life. Both women have the impact of these concepts in their works. Their works are written in English and Gujarati but the both are basically Indian in concepts.

In *Aagantuk*, the protagonist Ishaan is a saint. He is a scholar in scriptures. He preaches to Rajat, a sick young man that presents the Hindu vision of Life and immortal nature of the soul-Aatma:

I am not an effigy of bone and flesh. I am inexhaustible immortal and imperishable form-Brahma. I am ecstatic, I am omnipotent. I am not a body, I am a soul. I have no childhood, no youth, and no old age. I have no diseases, no death, no mourning and no fear. I am universal, eternal Supreme Being. Say Oom …..Hari: Oom!

The same vision of Hindu spiritualism and the belief regarding the creation of the earth and immortality of the soul are reflected in Namita’s Shakuntala:

*Know then that, for the born, death is certain, and for the dead, rebirth. The supreme god, Vishnu, protects the universe. By his command, Brahma creates the world; by his order, Shiva destroys it. Through Vishnu’s will all beings take birth, in various wombs, human and animal, good and evil, fit and unfit.*

Namita’s *Shakuntala* also has plenty of references of Indian philosophy and Hindu vision of life. It also explains the principle of Karma and rebirth of the immortal human soul. Shakuntala contemplates:

*Our pasts live on. Each one of us carries the residue of unresolved karmas, the burden of debts we have to repay......... Shiva, it is said, is also Smarahara, the destroyer of memory. I died in this city but I have not forgotten. How her body hungered and contorted, as she*
feasted on the flesh and threw the core away. Like a dhoomketu, the trail of a comet, the debris of life pursues me through birth and rebirth.  

The principle of Karma has a special position in the philosophy of Indian vision of life. All novels of Namita have some reference of it. In Shakuntala, the protagonist Shakuntala can not become mother. Shakuntala’s husband organizes Agnicayana ritual so that Shakuntala might bear a son and he may have an heir to light his funeral pyre. Descriptions of Govinda’s Upanayan Samskara, chanting of Gayatri mantras, offering yagya pavita, description of the legend of King Dushyanta’s secret marriage with Shakuntala by Gandharva ceremony, the description of Yajna of Sapatvasna to destroy rival wives etc. throw light on medieval rituals and conventions.

In Kadambarini Maa, Vijaya considers her self responsible for such a wicked son and regrets for her own carelessness in upbringing of Anil. It is expressed wonderfully with the allusion of the great Sanskrit epic, Mahabharata. She regrets, ‘Ha Gandhari e jo pata na bandhya hot to kadach Duryodhan aavo kukarmi na thayo hot.  

(If Gandhari had not closed her eyes with a strip, perhaps Duryodhan would not have been so sinful.) Duryodhan was one of the hundred Kauravas, the sons of Gandhari and Dhritrashtra, the king of Hastinapur.

**Major Dissimilarity: Contemplation on Death in Namita:**

Namita had experienced death very closely. She herself barely survived of cancer. She had witnessed deaths of many of her relatives. Her mother-in-law died in her arms; her sister-in-law Sunanda Bhandare,
Judge of the Delhi High Court succumbed to cancer and finally her husband. Thus for Namita after love death became her obsession. Her obsession with love and death is found in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, *The Book of Shadows* and *Shakuntala*. Death is not a matter of fear for Namita. In *A Himalayan Love Story* she says, “Death does not make us think of death: death urges us towards life” While Dhiruben has concern for life and some social issues pertaining worldly matters. Such concern for death is completely lacking in the novels of Dhiruben.

**Remarkable Similarity: Woman at the centre; Presentation of Woman and her condition:**

Woman is at the centre in the novels of both these novelists. If man has to live a blissful social life he is supposed to accept woman as a life partner and not as his servant or slave only. Man and woman, both have their own unique roles and responsibilities to sustain and to run happy human life on the planet. They are complement to each other, not rivals. Nature has produced these beings with a sense of completeness. *Ardhnareshwar* is the age-old concept of Hindu mythology that signifies the complement of Shiva and Shakti that is man and woman. The Shiva linga is worshipped to regenerate the human life on the earth. This is the conceptual base of the ancient wonderful institute of marriage.

Human life has changed with time. With the scientific development and spread of education many things are changed. Even the old traditions and beliefs have to face many alterations. Human life style has many incredible modifications. And still this process of change is continuous. But some of the age-old traditions and conventions have deep-rooted impact on the mindset of people. There is an equal contribution of man
and woman in society. Both are inevitable wheels to run the chariot of life. But man has not yet completely freed himself from some age-old dogma of superiority. There is not a sea-change in his attitude and approach towards woman. There is a very small class exception in it. Man believed woman a means of his enjoyment-\textit{upabhoga} and considered her a thing of his possession.

It was during Vedic era that a woman enjoyed equal status and respect in the society. She enjoyed freedom in all walks of life. Lopamudra, Gargi, Maitreyee are the names of such powerful ancient women. Sanskrit literature admires her; ‘\textit{Yatra Naryastu Pujayante Ramante Tatra Devta}’ means where a woman is honoured, all happiness is there. This statement emphasizes on woman’s dignity and distinction in ancient India. But since the times of the invasions of the foreign rulers, the condition of woman worsened in India. She was thrown into a corner behind a curtain (purdah) and her condition deteriorated from time to time in the four walls of house.

Even today man is the owner of a woman. He has all freedom in life. He decides everything about social, religious, economic and other aspects of life. Again there is an exception of a very small class in big cities. But the condition is the same in rural and remote areas where man has all economic powers and responsibilities. Patriarchy is still a tradition in rural India. Marriage is mandatory for woman. Her whole world revolves around her husband. Her identity, her comforts and her solace depend on her husband. An educated-modern woman like Priya also yearns for companionship of husband. Namita’s remark for Priya explicates it, “I am an Indian woman, I told myself, and for me my husband is my God. So I got down to telephoning him…..” 34 Priya, an
educated woman of Mumbai with experience of working in an office wants to do job in Delhi. Then her husband Suresh, a reputed lawyer’s ego is hurt and he is not happy with her, “Suresh was very upset at my taking up a job. ‘Priya, think of my position in society. Why, people will think—doesn’t her husband earn enough for her to take up such a job?’”

He beats Priya for some very petty reason. Even an advocate from a metropolitan city like Delhi still is of the opinion that a woman has no any identity. Namita reveals this mentality of such man through a dramatic event:

*Suresh was furious. For the first time in our marriage, he hit me. Again and again, angrily, relentlessly, he punched out at my face, my breasts, my thighs, and anything and everything he could lay his hands upon. ‘You stupid woman,’ he said, what were you when I married you? You were a nobody—a secretary in an office—I gave you status! What are you without me?*

Namita throws light on same hoary condition of woman in the society even in recent times. In *A Himalayan Story* Namita describes unhappy conjugal life of Lalit and Parvati. Both are well educated yet Lalit beats her for some trivial cause. They receive a letter from their old friend Mukul addressed to both of them, Mr. & Mrs. Lalit Joshi. Parvati eagerly opens it and pays very heavy price for it:
...... and his slap sent me hurtling across the small room. I fell over the cheap wooden settee; as I struggled to get up he made for me again.

‘How dare you! He screamed, his eyes dilated with anger and hatred. You prying whore...’ 37

Yet even in such a grim condition Parvati as a Hindu woman determines to carry on, “I was a Hindu woman, a married woman. I would tenaciously live out the role, safe in its stern unremitting code.” 38

Dhiruben also focuses such condition of woman in society. In case of Kadambari, her husband is extremely rich. But he is a man of bad habits. He is a drunkard and adulterous. He insults his parents and beats his wife. Dhiruben narrates the pathetic condition of Kadambari:

Parantu Kadambarinun ghar kai ghar nahotun. Var- e var pan nahoto. E hato keval ek kruar malik. Je manma moj aave tyare ghadibhar gel karto, pampalto, bolavato ane bheju chaske ke tarat marto, janvarthiye haddhoot karto, mari nakhvani dhamkio aapto. 39

(But Kadambari’s house was not a real house and even the husband was not a husband in the real sense of the term. He was a cruel master. Sometimes if in mood, he loved, soothed, chatted and if lost his temper, he beat and treated her worse than an animal and even threatened to murder.)

Kadambari is very unhappy but she remains silent as she has been taught so by her mother. When she is unable to bear the cruel behaviour
and tyranny of her husband she runs away to her mother, Aruna. But Aruna advises Kadamba to bear all the cruelties of her husband in the name of sanskaras. Therefore she sends her back to her father-in-law’s house giving her threats. Finally Kadamba attempts to commit suicide but she is saved by Vijaya and Panna.

The modern Shakuntala, in the novel *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory* is the prototype of all women, right from ancient times to the modern India. With whatever name may be called, she has been the presentation of womanhood. She is always lovable, caring, beautiful but controversial. She is emphatic, generous and kind, always worthy of praise and appreciation. She has given the proof of her patience, tolerance and strength at every step. In every aspect of her life she has shone like gold. She had many ups and downs in her life. In fact people used to discuss her beauty and virtues. But the condition changed and a woman had to depend on man, may be in the form of a father, husband or son. She did not have an independent identity. She was forbidden to read the scriptures. Namita comments, ‘A woman is like a cow fettered to a stump, my daughter,’ he said. ‘Her freedom is like the twine of duty that binds her to her household.’  

If she wants to live a free and her preferred life, she is always condemned. In mythology, every woman, though having great qualities and virtues, had to suffer a lot in the same way. It may be Kunti, Gandhari, Sita or Draupadi. Those women proved themselves great with the help of their tolerance. Everywhere we see them facing difficult situations and complications. Though they belonged to royalty, they failed to enjoy the luxuries of royal courts. Their fate and social structure did not allow them to enjoy the things. Along with Pandu, Kunti suffered a lot. But she
proved a source of inspiration for her sons. Gandhari proved herself as an ideal wife and with her blind husband, Dhritarashtra, she faced all calamities. She experienced the pains caused by the death of her sons. She might be the only woman who was a “Sati” who held her living husband’s hand and walked to the pyre with great patience. Draupadi was another great woman. Everywhere she gave the proof of her maturity and dignity. In spite of the experiences of great humiliation in the Royal Court, she stood strong and saw the death of her sons in the last battle. Sita also was the victim of social suspicion. She shared the lot of Ram in every difficulty. But at the moment of peace and happiness, the society suspected her character and Ram left her. Those were the great women who had gone through the fire of life but still preserved the spark within their personalities. But even today what does a woman get from the society?

Even today she is dependent on men for her economic requirements. She has no financial powers. The priest in *Shakuntala* reveals his patriarchal dominance and tells:

> Men are the masters of women. Your father protects in childhood, your husband protects you in youth, and your sons protect you in old age; a woman is never fit for independence, that is not the way of the world.  

She is not free to wander and travel at her own. In *Shakuntala* the protagonist Shakuntala is not happy with her husband though he is very rich. The priest asks Shakuntala why she is not happy:

> The mahasamant Srijan is a mighty man, a wealthy man. Why is it you are not happy?
What was it I could say? How could I properly respond?
‘I want to see the world.’ I said awkwardly. Even to my own ears it sounded preposterous. ‘I want to travel, as the menfolk do.’

Sometimes a woman has to perform double role. Especially in rural areas women do work to run the home besides the household work. In *A Himalayan Love Story* Namita clearly exposes the condition and role of Pahari women and depicts the male mentality of Pahari men:

> Our Pahari men were always crowding the local tea shops, playing cards or purposefully spitting out tobacco. They were the drones who gratefully left the labour to their women, the thin, hardy ghasyarans who balanced incredible heights of fodder and fuel wood on their heads.

Thus both the women novelists have tried to present the condition of women in their novels. Women play prominent role and they are at the centre in their novels.

**New Woman:**

The New Woman emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Initially, ‘New woman’ a term was used to describe a new generation of active women, who believed in women's suffrage, equal educational opportunities for women, sexual independence, and what they called rational dress in the end of nineteenth century. New Women figured in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* and in the works of Schreiner, Shaw,
Wells, Rebecca West, and others. Sarah Grand is said to have coined the phrase in the *North Atlantic Review* in 1894. The eighteen century woman was the angel of the house and hearth, a comfort and benefit to men, with a higher register of spirituality and sensitive than men. But as a new woman because of her new ideals and independence she presents a challenge to male characters. The New Woman is liberated and emancipated from her old role. In addition, the New Woman battled with identifying her social self and her essential self. Shakuntala can be called a new woman for her ideas but not for her deed. She has no faith in age-old unreasonable traditions and conventions. She says, “I could never understand rituals, why something had to be one way rather than another….. Who made these rules?” 44 It is the radical spirit that motivates her to elope with the Greek traveller.

Vijaya is truly a new woman. She is firm in her decision to fight against injustice to women in general and to her daughter in law in particular. She supports and encourages Kadambari in her fight against her husband’s tyranny. Vijaya desperately struggles and even takes a great risk to make her daughter-in-law happy. She tells Kadambari:

*Kadamb! Ane have ek vat yad rakhje- ghar chhodi daine nahin, gharma rahinej aapne aapni rite jivvanu chhe. Aapne potane mate jivvanun chhe.*(45)

(Kadamb! Now remember one thing- We do not have to leave this house. We have to live in this house and not only that but we have to live in our own way. We have to live for ourselves.)
There is a sea-change in the life of Kadambari. We find the ray of self-faith in her. Now she is timid no more. She gains confidence. Now she becomes independent in the real sense of the term. She gains self pride. Vijaya takes place of her real mother. Her rebirth is due to Vijaya. In the end, Kadamb is awakened and she determines to live her own life. She becomes a new woman. Kadambari says:

*Aa maro nirnay chhe. Havethi hun ahin j rahevani chhun. Mari rite rahevani chhun’........Rat-dahado fafadatman mare have nathi jivavu. Oshiyali thaine nathi rahevun. Mare jovu chhe-shodhavu chhe-
‘ke bhagvane mane sha mate janma aapyo chhe?’*  
*Kadambarina chahera par ek smit pragatyun.*

(This is my decision. Now I will live here. I will live in my own way. I don’t want to be dependent, I want to find………that why God has given me birth’ A bright smile shone on the face of Kadambari.)

Paro is a rebel who revolts against the social and moral codes assigned to a woman. She is neither chaste nor submissive as is expected of a woman. She denies all social codes, traditions, authority and all those things which force a woman to become a helpless creature. She gets an individuality of her own. She succeeds in making a place for her in male dominated society. Yet Paro can not be called a new woman because nothing is ideal with her. She leaves her husband and lives in open adulterous sin with Bucky Bhandpur. She has relations with Lenin and flirts with Shambhunath Mishra. She is not ashamed of it. But it must be admitted that Paro succeeds in coming out of the stereo type image of a
woman who always needs male protection and guidance. She need not depend on anybody.

**Feminist Perspectives with a Difference:**

Both have woman at centre in their novels. These women play leading and crucial roles in their novels. Both have attempted to delineate women and their condition in society. Their women are from middle or upper middle class strata of the contemporary society. However Dhiruben’s women are from traditional India whereas Namita’s women are from modern India.

In a conversation with Gita Viswanath, Shashi Deshpande, the renowned novelist said, “We are shaped by our childhood and our parents.” In *Kadambarini Maa*, Dhiruben also tries to expose those ideological elements that shape Kadambari, as a typical and a timid woman. These elements include social upbringing and family environment. Aruna, the mother of Kadambari plays crucial role in grooming the personality of her daughter. Due to this environment Kadambari becomes timid and fearful woman and she bears all the cruelties of her husband. She can not think of opposing it. He is drunkard and lacks good virtues. Kadambari is just a sex-satisfying toy for him, “Anil sathe parnine te jane potano ek manav tarikeno darajjo khoi bethi hati. Matra ek sadhan bani gai hati. Anilna manma vare vare uthta krodhna, ghrunana ane kamnana jabadasta tofanona pragtyanu. (After her marriage with Anil she had lost her status as a human being. She had just become an apparatus…the apparatus to tolerate anger, hatred and lust in the mind of Anil.)
Kadambari suffers the ill-treatment received from her husband. Due to her mother’s improper upbringing, she is timid and immature. Whenever she tries to raise a question, her mother makes her silent, “Anna, said Kadambari. Quiet! Keep quiet completely! And Kadambari became silent. This was the situation since childhood.”

Shashi Deshpande adds:

....we are already burdened with a baggage that has been given to us. The fact is that we don’t start with a picture of our selves on a clean slate. Inscribed on it already are things told to us by others that determine our behaviour, ideas, expectations and dreams.

Simone de Beaviour’s well-known statement, “one is not born a woman, one becomes one” has a special relevance to India where conventions, religious and social taboos dictate and inhibit woman’s individuality. The behavioural patterns for the Indian women are predetermined by the family and caste into which one is born and values and traditions of a culture that upholds archetypical images of women.

Shiwadkar Meena comments, “Ancient Indian literature and mythology have internalized the concept of the sacrificing mother and the devoted, enduring wife through the ‘image of Sati, Savitri and Shakuntala.’ In almost all societies, a woman is culturally assigned norms of behaviour in which standards of conduct and decorum set the boundaries for her as external signs of what it means to be seemingly proper and respectable within the differentiated hierarchy called gender.
Shakuntala, the protagonist in *Shakuntala* desires to see the world, ‘I want to see the world,’ I said awkwardly. Even to my own ears it sounded preposterous. ‘I want to travel, as the men folk do’.  

A woman was restricted in the four walls of house. She was not allowed to develop her talent and knowledge. The narration of old period in *Shakuntala* reflects the attitude of man:

*In the porch of a plain, unadorned temple, shadowed by an enormous pipala tree, a Vyas, a public reader of the sacred texts, was reciting tales from the Puranas to his audience….. ‘Women and Shudras may listen to Puranas from the mouth of a Brahmin,’ the Vyas continued, ‘they should never attempt to recite the Puranas themselves’. He declared his throat with careless condescension…..*  

Any form of deviation from prescribed norms or any display of transgressive potential is violation to the ideal image of womanhood makes her an unruly woman to be ostracized by society. As Bartky points out,

*the situation of woman is such that she, a free and autonomous being, finds her self in a world where she is compelled by man to assume the status of an inferior to whatever man imagines himself to be. Women are bound to their oppression, “by male control of the dominant institutions and the dominant ideology...*
Namita and Dhiruben move forward in a quest to know who and what she is. Both these women novelists urge women to achieve autonomy, to discover and nurture their authentic self through live experience for self realization.

Dhiruben Patel and Namita Gokhale have feministic perspective in their novels but there is a visible difference between them. Dhiruben does not accuse merely man for the pathetic situation of woman in our society. She points out that many times a woman is also responsible for suffering of a woman. Sometimes a woman is enemy of a woman i.e. Shephali-Vatsala in Hutashan. Thus a woman is also responsible for woman’s present condition.

Namita and Dhiruben both have highlighted the tyranny and torturing of women in upper middle class. Woman becomes a victim of physical torture in our society i.e. priya is beaten by Suresh in Paro. Kadambari is beaten by Anil in Kadambaini Maa. In case of these two novels both belong to upper middle class and both are well educated families. Hence, in order to gain equality and to realize their human potential, women must transcend their distinctive femaleness to lead the kind of life men do, in other words they must be autonomous.

**Presentation of Men:**

Though their novels are advocacy of women and their situation, neither Namita nor Dhiruben presents any prejudice against men. They nowhere portray any male characters with any kind of resentment or detestation. Dhiruben deserves special admiration for skilled depiction of women’s feelings and sentiments. She has a knack to portray the state of
mind of women and psychology of women characters. Thus both have feminist concerns in their novels but none shows any extremism in presenting them. None shows any extreme dislike for men.

**Title:**

The title of any literary work has a particular role to play. It’s also an equally creative part. Thus the title of any literary or non-literary work amounts greatly to its success and significance. Titles are generally given after the names of the protagonists, themes or recurrent motifs of the works. To select a phrase or a line from works of great writers is a modern-fashionable trend in Gujarati literature. Some titles refer to some legendary, historical or political event and remind a feel of that time. The title also speaks of the artist’s vision of life and perception of reality.

The titles of the novels by Namita Gokhale and Dhiruben patel mainly highlight the theme of their novels or they are based on the protagonists. The titles of Dhiruben Patel’s novels are symbolic and metaphorical. *Andhali Gali*—‘blind alley’ depicts an unmarried woman’s craving for happy conjugal life at a later age. Kundan realizes the needs and bliss of happy married life at the age of above forty. She is inspired and encouraged by the happy-blessed couple, Paresh-Shubhangi. Even the need of sexual accomplishment also makes her longing for the same at later age. But it is too late. The abrupt reveal of her late father’s illicit relations with a woman also gives an intolerable upset to her. Finally she is doomed to live the same dull and boring life in her deadly and dusty house *Kundan Villa* till the end of her life. The cruel destiny throws her back to the endless alienated and hopeless life—that is in that blind alley-*Andhali Gali*. Another novel focusing on a mother-in-law’s struggles to
project spirit and self esteem into a flaccid and lifeless daughter-in-law is *Kadambarini Maa*—‘Kadambari’s Mother’. Mother is the most loving and sacrificing creature in our life. Kadambari’s real mother can not save her from the tyrannies of her cruel husband but her mother-in-law fights for her and awakens a new-spirited woman in Kadambari. The title is very apt and symbolic.

*Hutashan*—‘the fire’ deals with a self esteemed woman’s efforts to live with self respect and make her son happy in his conjugal life. But in doing so she has to suffer the agony of insults and detestation of her daughter-in-law, Shephali. The title throws light on the theme. It is metaphorical and suggestive. *Aagantuk*—‘an outsider’ is a wonderful portrayal of a recluse-sanyasi who comes back after fifteen years of renunciation. He gives up his sanyasi life and returns to worldly-sansari life. Dhiruben has exposed the selfishness and hypocrisy of the family relations of contemporary people. A real brother is not welcomed heartily in their so called well-settled life and Ishan becomes an outsider. The title is very appropriate and interesting.

Likewise Namita’s novels have metaphorical and symbolic titles. In *Paro: Dreams of Passion* Paro is the central figure and the novel describes her ‘free will life’ and her longing for hedonistic life. It presents how these dreams and desires of Paro leads her to her ruin in the end.

It is openly reflected through her novels that Namita has a special obsession with death. She herself says that mention of death reminds us importance of life. *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* delineates a clever-old woman’s struggles with destiny and her victory in it. Though the
central figure is Gudiya, the old grandmother plays a dominant role in this novel. The novel also makes a satire on religiosity, it has an extraordinary description of death and the shadow of death is hovering in the temple premises since its foundation with some pebbles. It is the most appropriate and metaphorical title to this novel. It directly indicates the theme, motif and highlights the dominant character of the novel.

*A Himalayan Love Story* is Himalayan in scale and setting. The Himalayan Hill Town of Nainital becomes the backdrop of the novel. The story takes place in Nainital but it also refers to some other places. It begins at Jeolikote, a tourist spot, on road to Nainital and takes the reader to Nainital, then Bareilly, and even shifts to Hong Kong and has references of some significant experiences to the protagonist Mukul at the international cities like Oslo, New York etc. The hero Mukul is an international civil servant and has a generous heart like the Himalaya. It also indicates the spiritual significance of Himalaya.

*The Book of Shadows* part ghost story, part erotic romance, is not a typical ghost story. A shadow is a deceptive thing. The novel is full of such illusive characters and events. It leaves the reader in thrill and excitement with the haunted house. The house indicates human mind which has unusual happenings and illusions. It describes Rachita’s strange experiences in this house. But there is the fine line between the substance and the shadows that this novel is all about. The shadows haunt in this house and in the mind of Rachita for whom the house is a refuge. *The Book of Shadows* presents a fine example of a real fiction. It throws light on a tormented, tortured psychic like Rachita. The shadows are simply reflection of Rachita’s illusiory mind. The novel describes a world
of fiction through the illusions of a character that is obsessed by past-horrible acid attack. Namita excellently created the selfless character of Rachita. The spirit behind the curtain is the another self of Rachita. It presents the internal and the external character of Rachita. Namita narrates:

*Proprioception is the science of the sense of the self. My centre, my identity, my selfhood had for a while abandoned the confines of skin and bone, abandoned my cage and run away to cower in dusty corners of other abandoned memories and perceptions. Dona Rosa and others are not real........... In the shadow world between the living and the unliving, even sickness is an indication of a possible restoration to health...*  

Thus the title signifies the superb blend of psychology and reality in the novel. The house is a place of refuge and healing touch for the abandoned character like Rachita.

In *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory*, Shakuntala is the protagonist and the central figure of the novel. The novel revolves around her life. Gokhale's Shakuntala has been named after Kalidas’ heroine; she also carries within herself the samskaras of abandonment. The story of modern Shakuntala is just like the legendary Shakuntala. Based on Sanskrit myths and legends, the novel is truly Indian, Shakuntala’s reincarnation tells her story at the ghats of Kashi with the legend as the backdrop. So the sub title *Play of Memory* is also quite apt and appropriate. Woman has been dependent on man and has secondary position in male dominated society for thousand years. Focusing on condition of women in past and present Namita compares modern
Shakuntala and her condition continuously with the legendary-mythological Shakuntala. This modern Shakuntala also was hungry for experience. But her elopement with the Yavana proves fatal in her life. He seduced her then he loses interest in her. He also confesses that it happened to him as well, quite a few times in his life. King Dushyanta also did the same thing. He also seduced Shakuntala in the sacred grove and forgot her. The modern Shakuntala is not helped by any celestial mother; she becomes a fallen woman –Yaduri. Thus it is a metaphorical title by Namita.

It can be concluded that in selection of appropriate and attractive titles for their novels, Namita and Dhiruben have taken much care and great efforts. Both the novelists have exhibited their attitude towards life and the insight into it. Their titles are rich in symbolic significance and metaphorical meanings. They are quite indicative and appropriate.

Settings:

Aristotle, in his Poetics, calls the poet or the creative writer a “maker”. This “maker” makes or creates a world of his own, which recognizably and uniquely is his, into which the reader can enter. Thus we speak of the world of Shakespeare, the world of Dickens etc... The writer is always affected by the world he lives in. Sometimes he creates a world found nowhere yet he unknowingly presents the contemporary world.

The world of Namita Gokhale is of Mumbai and Delhi. She started her career in 80s in Mumbai and then shifted to Delhi. Namita selects her scenes and characters from the narrow range she knew best and lived where, the metropolitan cities of Mumbai and Delhi- people and places
she knew intimately from personal observation. The main part of the story takes place in Mumbai and Delhi. She wrote about this life because she knew it well and because she struggled in it. Through Paro we get the picture of life of the upper middle class of Mumbai and Delhi during 80s. She does not paint angels or imps, because she can not see them in majority in the contemporary society. She simply presents the man of the day, whom she can see and whom she knows thoroughly. She has painted them for the readers. She does not care whether the readers like the picture or not.

In Gokhale's world, the misty mountains of Himalayas-Kumaoni hills forever remain an eternal backdrop. The word Kumaon is believed to have been derived from ‘Kurmanchal’, meaning land of the Kurmavata (the tortoise incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the preserver according to Hindu mythology). The region of Kumaon is named after as such. Kumauni or Kumaoni are people from Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, India. They include all those who speak the Kumaoni language or any of its numerous dialects, living in the Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Pithoragarh, Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar districts of Uttarakhand, India. Namita Gokhale is herself a Kumaoni by birth. She spent her early childhood in Nainital. Some autobiographical elements are also reflected in all her works. A Himalayan Love Story, The Book of Shadows and Shakuntala: The Play of Memory have Himalayan-Kumaoni hills as the settings. The hill folk with their throbbing life are also reflected in these novels. The Himalayan hill stations and towns like Nainital, Ranee-khet, Jeolikote, Bhovali etc are the places where the story takes place. In The Book of Shadows a hundred years old house, on a hill near the Himalayan Hill town of Ranee-khet becomes the spot of the novel. Almost all incidents take place here. The haunted house plays such a
crucial role that it becomes like a living character in the novel. Similarly the hill town Nainital is narrated so minutely in *A Himalayan Love Story* that it becomes like a living character. In *Shakuntala* also the mountains, rivers and forests remain as a backdrop. Here the protagonist Shakuntala is born and brought up in hill village of Himalayas on river bank of Ganga. In *Paro: Dreams of Passion* the metropolitan city of Mumbai and Delhi - the capital of India serves as the setting of the novel. These cities with their real zest and appearance are presented. *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* has a temple in suburb area of Delhi as its spot of action. Here is a prominent similarity and dissimilarity between these women writers. Dhiruben also chooses the city of Mumbai as place of action for her novels like *Andhali Gali, Hutashan* and *Aagantuk*. But none of the four novels has any place for Himalayan-hilly or rural areas like Namita’s novels. *Kadambarini Maa* also deals with a big urban area.

Another key resemblance between these two women writers is their attraction and attachment for some buildings and locations. Some places, houses, or buildings play crucial role in their novels. They have notable and repetitive references that give a striking impact on the mind of the reader. In Dhiruben’s *Andhali Gali* Kundan’s old dusty house of ‘Kundan Villa’ and in Namita’s *A Himalayan Love Story* Parvati’s house, ‘Wee Nooke’ have arresting parallel. Both these houses become primary places in the novels. Similarly ‘Ratanmenor’ in *Kadambarini Maa*, the temple in *Gods Graves and Grandmother*, the old hill house in *The Book of Shadows*, the Ashram of Uttarkashi, the eleventh floor-flat of the building ‘The Nest’ and the fifth floor flat at ‘Padmarag’ building in *Aagantuk* have key positions in these novels. The city of Mumbai with its complete temperament is portrayed by both the writers in their novels *Aandhali Gali, Paro* and *Aagantuk*. 
Characterization:

The characters are from middle or upper middle class in the novels of Namita and Dhiruben. They are not of very high rank and of extremely high social status. Priya, Paro, Shakuntala, Parvati, Gudiya Ammi, Rachita, Shakuntala, Suresh, Mukul, Hiranand Master, Lalit and others are not from high strata of the society. They are real and ordinary people. Similarly Dhiruben’s characters Shubhangi, Kadambari, Kundan, Vijaya, Vatsala, Shephali, Ishaan, Anil, Paresh are common people from middle class stratum of the society. Usually urban society is in the centre of the novels by Dhiruben Patel. The characters represent the contemporary social milieu. The characters of this society positively help the theme. The halo of urban society is obviously revealed on account of the living style, speech, behaviour, tempers, activities etc. of the characters. Namita’s women reveal the upper middle class of the modern times through their escapades, sexual acrobatics, their world view etc. They reflect the glimpse of the showmanship of the high class society, their shallow life pattern, their pomp and their relationships. The same is Dhiruben’s world. The women like Shephali, Shalmali, Rima present the life full of superficiality and show.

A striking difference noted is Dhiruben’s women are from traditional and conventional milieu. They respect the moral boundaries that are set by the society. Where as the women of Namita believe in free and emancipated life. Paro and Priya are not satisfied with one man. They have attraction for hedonistic life. Paro could attract many men, but could not get anybody for herself. She could manage to make everybody dance with her. Paro has relations with Bucky Bhandpur, Lenin and Shambhunath Mishra. She has two failures in marriages with B.R. and
Loukas. According to her, “It’s part of being a Beautiful woman, it’s a full time occupation.” Shakuntala also crosses the boundaries and ultimately she has to suffer a lot. She betrays her husband and runs away with the Yavana. But finally she is also rejected by him. Unlike these women of Namita, the women of Dhiruben obey and respect the moral values of life in general and traditions and Samskaras of Indian culture in particular.

The women characters of Namita aspire to be out of four walls of house. Paro, Priya, Rachita, Parvati, Gudiya all want to have economic and social freedom. Paro, Priya and Shakuntala even forgo their moral ethics and values to acquire luxuries and freedom in life. In present times in metropolitan cities women have no interest in marriages and children. As marriage cuts woman off from the main stream of life and prevents her from achieving her goals. Consequently, we observe that marriages are dwindling and live in relationships are in fashion in big cities in India. Unlike Namita’s characters Dhiruben’s women have interest and faith in marriages. They do not fall prey to shine and glory of luxuries and comforts. They respect the norms of the society. They do not believe in free will life. Shubhangi, Vatsala and Vija are the examples of it. Even Kundan feels at the age of forty four that marriage is required in life. The women like Shalmali, Rima and Shephali who run after show and materialistic comforts do not deviate from the main stream of life like Shakunta, Priya and Paro.

Namita’s modern women Paro and Priya believe in complete hedonistic approach to life. They also drink wine and enjoy life. Paro is a heavy drunkard. Frequently these metropolitan families have celebration parties and women also join men openly. Namita uncovers such highly modern culture of Delhi and Mumbai, “I went to the bathroom, returned,
and poured a drink. Suresh walked to the bar. ‘Get me a drink as well, Suresh,’ Paro cooed. None of the women characters of Dhiruben think of drinking wine or having sexual relations with other than the life partner. The critic A.G. Khan is very harsh in his opinion about the protagonists of Namita. He comments:

The narrator, Priya Sharma, and her idol Paro deserve neither sympathy nor serious concern. When seventy percentage of population crave for a crust of bread or a thatchet; to publish, enjoy and sympathize with such pseudo victims is a kind of sin. It is un-Indian and extremely harmful to women’s cause.

In Andhali Gali, Dhiruben narrates the life of a lonely lady, Kundan. Detached from the social relations as Kundan is, her character has been developed psychologically. Kundan in Andhali Gali, and Parvati in A Himalayan Love Story have a similarity, both long for love and sexual satisfaction. But ultimately both are doomed to live lonely life. Dhiruben has typical stereotype characters while Namita has living and original characters. Namita’s characters sometimes seem abnormal or have unusual behaviour, i.e. Parvati, Rachita, Shakuntala are not entirely normal, they have something unusual in them. Parvati’s condition is narrated: “I wept a lot, sometimes I screamed. The doctors came again. They could not understand what I was saying......... Sometimes I laughed without reason.”

Ruchita in The Book of Shadow is detached from the routine stream of life and lives in the house at hill. She is not fulfilled in love in life. Kundan also lives a lonely life in a dull house. Dhiruben creates typical
social characters while the characters of Namita are abnormal and love obsessed people. The similarity we find in the creations of both the women writers is that-woman is at the centre in their works. Namita also has woman and her condition at centre and the same is the case with Dhiruben. She also deals with woman and her issues in her novels except *Aagantuk*.

Namita’s pen portrays many widows in her novels. Ammi, Parvati’s mother, Phoolwati, Lila, Mukul’s mother, Priya’s mother, Shakuntala’s mother are all widows in her novels. Secondly the girls are not looked after well by these careless widow mothers. Paro, Gudiya, Parvati, Shakuntala are not looked after carefully and are not treated lovingly by their mothers. Namita’s young girl protagonists are usually orphans i.e. Gudiya, Parvati, Priya, Shakuntala, Rachita lose their fathers at early age and are brought up by their careless widow mothers. Namita’s women become widow at early age i.e. Gudiya’s mother, Parvati’s mother, Shakuntala’s mother, Mukul’s mother and Priya’s mother. All these mothers prove not very responsible and caring unlike the mothers depicted by Dhiruben Patel.

Dhiruben portrays the most honoured image of a woman- that is of ‘mother’. The creation of Vatsala is the finest example in *Hutashan*. She is a very loving and caring mother. Anil is ready to give divorce to his extremely bad wife Shephali because she is a nag in his life. She always insults and behaves very badly with her mother-in-law. But Vatsala tolerates every humiliation and makes a great sacrifice. She along with her husband Rohit decides to leave the house just for the sake of her son’s happiness. Anil can realize her mother’s supreme sacrifice for him:
Garud jevi pankho prasarine mari maa udi jay chhe door – udayachalni dishaman!
Mara sukh mate- mara kalyanni kamna sathe e jati rahe chhe..........Karan ke e mari maa chhe. 61
(My mother has flown far away spreading her wings like an eagle- in the direction of the mountain Vindhyachal!
She has left for my happiness-she has gone with an aspiration of my well being ….because she is my mother.)

Even the foolish mother Aruna is a well wisher of her daughter in Kadambarini Maa. Though she is a materialistic woman she is interested in happiness and well being of her daughter. She is easily deceived by her wicked son-in-law and she favours him in his evil plans. But she is doing it just for the happiness of her daughter. Aruna can not recognize virtue in Vijaya and vice in Anil. But her concern for her daughter is admirable.

The depiction of such great motherhood is missing in Namita. Mukul’s mother never showed good interest in his brought up. The same is the case of Parvati, her mother never cared for Parvati. Mukul felt: My mother was tall, broad, slow and stupid. She never discussed the hopes she must have reposed in me.” 62 In Shakuntala, Shakuntala’s illiterate mother is completely a careless woman. Shakuntala is deprived of motherly affection and care. Namita narrates agony of the teenager:

Then the rain stops…. My flaxen skirt is soaked, streaked with mud, and when at last I make my way home, my mother strikes thrice across the face. ‘You wicked, heartless girl! She shrieks. ‘Were you born only to
trouble and torment me........ I hated everything about my mother, from her tangled hair to her shuffling gait and her cracked dirty feet. I did not ever want to become like her.  

Most of the characters of Namita have passion for Hindi films. Many of her major or minor characters aspire to be film actors or actresses, Gudiya, Raju, Kalki, Phoolwati and Ammi have special attraction for movies. Perhaps it is because Namita worked as an editor of a Film Magazine in her early career.

Both the novelists have real characters and they are from the contemporary society. An obvious dissimilarity is found; Namita’s protagonists are young girls while Dhiruben has mature and married women as the protagonists. Vijaya, Kadambari, Kundan, Shubhangi, Vatsala are married or mature women. Namita’s young and orphan girl protagonists Gudiya, Parvati, Priya, Shakuntala, Rachita have no father and they are brought up by their mothers or relatives. Abnormality is seen as a common feature in Paro, Rachita and Parvati. Secondly almost all women of Namita are interested in nail polishing.

A salient contrast is noted that most of Namita’s minor or major characters die of various incurable diseases like TB, cancer etc. or they commit suicide. Critics find them as autobiographical elements in her novels. Her husband’s early death and the other deaths in her family are reflected in her works. It seems that death is hovering over them ie. Lalit, Parvati’s mother, Shakuntala, Lohniju, Hiranand master, Mrs. Roxanna, Ammi, Sundar Pahelwan, Paro all die untimely. Namita’s characters have
impact of autobiographical elements unlike those of Dhiruben. In Dhiruben’s novels the environment is completely light.

Contrasting women characters are created by Dhiruben. Vijaya belongs to spirited group of women while Aruna is an ordinary typical woman interested in house hold matters only. Aruna is a so called practical mother who advises Kadambari to bear the tyrannies of her husband, “Kadamb! Strini jatne bahu hoshiyari sari nahin. Ha e ha karo ane narmashthi raho toj jagatma jivay”.

(As a woman one should not show much intelligence. One should be submissive to all and live one’s life) Whereas her spirited mother-in-law Vijaya teaches the lessons of self-worth and self-respect to Kadambari, “Kadamb! Ek divas hun nahin houn tyare pan tare jivvanu chhe. Aatmasanmanthi, anandthi jivvanu chhe”. (Even when I am not there, you have to live life with self respect and joy)

Vijaya is a revolutionary woman of Dhiruben ever created in Gujarati literature. She desperately struggles to save Kadambari from the tyrannies of her husband Anil. She is ready to fight against her own son for the sake of her innocent daughter-in-law. Moreover, she strives to make Kadambari self confident and self-reliant. She is a New Woman in Gujarati literature who asks her daughter-in-law to get divorce and break the bond. Not only this, she also allows her to abort if she does not want the child. She regrets for such an awful son like Anil and considers her self responsible for such nurture. Her preaching to Kadambari is both unique and historical in Gujarati literature. She says:

_Aa duniya ghani moti chhe.... Ghana badha manaso chhe. Ema ghanu badhu thay chhe. Navun navun, vichitra, chamatkarik, aahladak! E haji tare jovanu chhe,_
Janvanun chhe. Janmyano aanand manvano chhe, jivyano utsav ujavvanochhe. 66

(This world is very big. There are many people. A plenty of things happen there. It is strange, miraculous, and magnificent. You have yet to see and know that world. You have to enjoy life. You have to rejoice your birth.)

A strange frequently occurring happening is seen with Namita’s women characters. Her characters meet with unusual odd encounters with some mad or eccentric woman. Rachita, Parvati and Shakuntala face such bizarre gatherings. Dhiruben’s women are completely normal and live routine social life. Shakuntala loses her way in the forest and at night she has to struggle in the terrible condition in the forest:

Long into my trek, I saw a circlet of fire floating towards me...... The vision descended to the level of my eyes, and I saw an unusually tall woman naked but for piece of coarse cloth around her waist, bend down and squat before me. 67

Parvati also meets such a strange woman in the forest. The mysterious mad woman talks strangely. Parvati narrates the encounter in her own words:

She was tall and lean and very strange: her eyes glimmered and she smelt of tobacco.... She was dressed in several layers of rags, and her hair was matted and dirty and looked as though it had not been combed in decades.... ‘You silly girl,’ she said, ‘you’re young now,
but remember soon, very soon, you’ll become just like me! 68

Dhiruben’s women protagonists have no love affairs or sexual relations with other persons. Her women are from traditional and conventional families. On the other hand, Namita has extraordinarily presented non-traditional image of Paro. She denies authority, tradition, social and moral codes and makes a place for her in the society. Paro and Shakuntala revolt against the norms of femininity where a woman is supposed to be chaste and submissive. They are the women who rise even above liberation or emancipation. Paro has relations with Lenin, Bucky Bhandpur and Shambhunath Mishra. Yet she is not at all ashamed of it. Paro never feels a sense of shame in talking about sex or any thing obscene. About the rape with her in her teenage she shamelessly admits, ‘Funny thing is that I wasn’t raped, I loved every moment of it....’ 69

Both novelists are good story teller. They have simple and straightforward plots in their novels. Flashback technique is used in Aagantuk by Dhiruben. In many of Namita’s novels, the story moves between past and present.

Both the novelists use simple language. Namita has many Hindi words. Dhiruben uses English phrases. Both use common and well known proverbs and sayings from their respective languages. Both have dramatic narrations. Comparatively Namita narrates highly dramatic incidents i.e. paro’s quarrel with Lenin, her attempts to commit suicide, her attempts to seduce Suresh etc.. The characters like Phoolwati, the three brothers-
Jeewan Jaundice, Mohan Mischief and Sohan Selfish are the example of Namita’s capacity to create wit and humour.

Dhiruben has masterful grip of sustaining the interest of the reader. She ends each chapter of the novel at such an unfinished point that the reader’s curiosity is maintained till the end. Both make picturesque narrations of the places and incidents. Dhiruben creates the picture of the cities and places. While Namita makes wonderful narrations of hills, hill folk and natural surroundings. She is excellent in painting the haunted houses, caves, dilapidated temples and incidents of nightmares. The descriptions in her novels are fantastic, strange, haunting and grotesque; some of them are of course, bizarre. Dhiruben has simple style of narrations. She has a social world between the four walls of house. That is a striking contrast between these two contemporary women novelists’ style.

Namita’s novels have a plenty of references of Hindu beliefs, legends, and myths. The mention of gods and goddesses makes her novels completely Indian simply written into English. Dhiruben also has many of references of gods and goddesses, Hindu beliefs, legends, references of characters from Ramayana, Mahabharat and Puranas. Both the writers are well acquainted with Sanskrit literature and other traditional ceremonies of Indian life.

Both are excellent in presenting the inner thoughts and feelings of their characters. The images of kite and creeper convey the exact condition of Kundan. Like a dull and static bird kite, Kundan also lives a lonely and dreary life. The image of watering of creeper and its revival symbolizes the changes in the attitude of Kundan. She is interested in life
and she wants to marry now. The image of a rag suggests the condition of Kadambari. She is used like a rag and thrown away by Anil. Kadambari is well aware of it. But as a dependent woman she is helpless. Similarly the image of flying kite presents Shakuntla’s yearning for freedom. She is interested in visiting new places; she has interest in scriptures and knowledge. But as a woman her freedom and her areas of interest are restricted by the contemporary society. Namita portrays:

*In the month of Magh…. the people in the hills fly parchment kites adorned with tails of straw and thin strips of cloth….. If I were a kite I could have fluttered in the wind and viewed all the lands below. I would have seen the sacred river that flows by our hills, until it meets the rocks, and the plains that stretch on and on until the end of the world. Now I was a bride, I had been instructed to look at the earth, to keep my gaze down and appear modest.*

The image of chained baby monkey also implies the condition of Shakuntala in particular and of the women in general. Narration of various Indian rituals like marriage and other religious events make their works Indian in real sense of the term.

Namita usually uses first person narrative technique. Dhiruben has third person narrations method. Both use symbols and images to make effective narration. The use of nostalgia also affects the narrative technique of Namita. Along with nostalgia, illusions, dreams and memories, the narrations of natural surroundings make Namita’s style rich and gripping.
Both plot and characters have decayed in the modern novel. The novel in twenty first century is no longer a story, if by the story we mean a sequence of events leading up to a climax and then to a denouement. The novelist today concentrates on the actual process of living and tries to depict the myriad of impressions, vague and fleeting that are constantly flowing through the human consciousness. The process of living looks backwards and forwards and in this way the past exists the present and the present looks to the future. Therefore the older convention of story telling in which there is straight-forward, chronological narration of events, is regarded as artificial and is accordingly rejected. In Namita the action moves between past and present. Namita also uses the technique of nostalgia in her novels. Mukul and Rachita are the best example of it. Namita excels in extolling the erotic and the exotic.

Dhiruben also uses flashback technique. Ishan’s past life and experiences are presented through his memory. The most admirable feature of dhiruben’s style is that she ends each chapter at an unfinished point which creates a sense of curiosity and eagerness in the mind of the reader.

Vision of Life:

There is a Sanskrit saying “Mandoapi kim na prayojanam” means - even a fool does nothing without a purpose. Then how can a writer write anything without a certain purpose in his/her mind? Art for Art’s sake or Art for Life’s sake is an age-old debatable subject of purpose of literary creation. But after all a writer lives in the society. He is also a social animal. Therefore naturally whatever he thinks or feels is the reflection of
his experiences and observations. Every writer has a special vision for his creation. He finds the characters and events in real life and then with the help of his power of imagination he makes it a work of art. Fiction has its base in fact. Each work of art presents its creator’s vision of life. For some, life is mysterious. In case of others it is ‘a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing’. But for some people life is delightful and adventurous. It all depends on how one perceives at life. As beauty lies in the beholder’s eyes, the vision of life differs from individual to individual.

Namita is a pure artist. Namita’s vision is essentially comic. She believes in ‘art for art’s sake’ but it doesn’t mean that she is a writer without any vision of life. The reader does not find a direct message in her works. It simply means that there is no intrusive message, philosophy or morality in her novels. Her novels are free from all didacticism. Some effective lines of Namita throw light on her thoughts and conceptions of life. In *The Book of Shadows* she finds that ‘Life is a constant series of choices. Some you make, and some are inevitably made for you.” 71 But among these choices and options man must have wisdom and sight to choose the sensible and practical:

*To be ourselves we must remain in control of our scripts.*

*We must make and remake ourselves, possess and repossess our world, cast and recast our lot in every precious moment. Above all, we must know what to hold on to, what to discard, in this radical flux which is life.* 72
Namita considers experiences as an integral part of life. According to her, ‘Experience is the raw material of life. Life is the sum of our meager experiences.’

In fact she is a sharp analyst of human passions and human relationships especially relationships centering round sex and aspiration. Life must be accepted and lived, despite its many shortcomings, follies and foibles. This may be said to be the vision of life for Namita. Through the character sketches of Paro and Priya, Namita gives an essential message that life of hedonism is not a solution to the problems life provides with. The same vision of Dhiruben is reflected when Vijaya, the spirited woman encourages Kadambari, “Jivan kyarey dukhbharel – ekla dukhthi bharel u nathi hotun.” (Life does not have miseries only) Ammi takes up life and prospers even in adverse condition. Rachita despite her abnormal situation lives, But Namita also seems to reject the traditional norms. Paro seduces many men but consequently she has to suffer. Shakuntala’s desire and longing for learning and experiences are acceptable but her elopement with the Yavan leads her to fatal end in Kashi. Priya also has to regret for her betrayal to her husband. The ends in the novels like Paro: Dreams of Passion, Gods, Graves and Grandmother, A Himalayan Love Story and Shakuntala create a pessimistic impact on the mind of the reader. There is a striking difference in the ends of their novels.

Dhiruben always sees the bright side of life. She has an optimistic view for life. She says that life is not full of miseries and sorrows only. She has speculation over life. She broods over what is aim of life? She is in favour of revolt against injustice in life. Where as Namita’s novels end on a tragic point. Paro dies, Shakuntala also surrenders to death, Parvati is
doomed to mad-lonely life; Gudiya is left to destiny because she is alone with her baby yet to be born. Her protagonists, Paro and Shakuntala die, Parviti and Gudiya are doomed to struggling-tragic life.

Thus the ends in the novels of Namita’s present a gloomy side of life. But Dhiruben feels that though our life has many conflicts and problems, we should not give up. The life is worth living. Dhiruben wants to propagate an optimistic vision. Vatsala as a spokesperson of Dhiruben says, “Aa sansarni darekedarek paristhitino ukel hoy chhej......bhole dukhdayak lage, pan hoyaj ...shodhi kadhvano.”  

(Every problem has solution in this world. It may look difficult… but it is there…Do find it out.)

According to Dhiruben Patel life has various phases and all these phases have their different purpose and realization. Vijaya describes the phases and functions of life in a very simple way, ‘Juvanine ena judan sukh hoy chhe, to ghadpanne enan aagvan! Jivan kyarey dukhbharelu – ekla dukhthi bharelu nathi hotun.  

(Youth has its different delight; the old age has its distinctive contentment. Life has no desolations only - it is never full of miseries only.) Panna, the strong sister-in-law of Kadambari pours spirit in timid Kadambari and prepares her to fight the battle of life. When Kadambari attempts to commit suicide she says, ‘ E j ke jivan e mane chhe etlu shudra nathi. Sankuchit nathi. Ati vishal chhe. E bruhadno ek aparpmpar mahima chhe.  

(Life is not as despicable as she thinks. It is not so narrow, it is grand. It is a part of the universe, it has its meaning.)

Thus both the women novelists have many similarities and dissimilarities regarding the thematic concerns, presentation of women and other craftsmanship in their novels. Both have woman at the centre
and have feminist perspective in their novels but there is a visible
difference between them.
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