Chapter III

Novels of Dhiruben Patel
Aandhali Gali

Aandhali Gali was published in 1983. Human mind is unpredictable. Sometimes we can not know a person thoroughly even though we live with him or her for years. Kundan, an unmarried woman of about forty five, lives a lonely life in Mumbai, is the central figure in this short novel. Her father, Ratilal loved Kundan so much that he does not marry after the death of his wife. He does not marry after the death of his wife because he was mindful of his daughter. Therefore Kundan too hasn’t married though she is forty five. After the death of her father, Kundan wants to have a tenant in her big house ‘Kundan Villa’ as she feels lonely. Kundan’s father left sufficient wealth for her livelihood. Giving importance to the love story of Paresh, a stranger, Kundan allows him and his wife Shubhangi to stay in a part of her house. When she hears the later part of the love story of Paresh through Shubhangi, she doesn’t take interest in their life only but she becomes conscious about her own life too.

For forty five years, Kundan had been a virgin in the real sense of the term. Now she, all of a sudden, thinks of the marriage influenced by the loving and blissful conjugal life of Paresh–Shubhangi after their prolonged separation. The writer beautifully presents marriage as a bond of love:

Pati patni banne digmudh thaine Kundan same joi rahyan. Teni vat jetli anadhari hati tetlij sachi hati. Bija
ek manasno bhar jivanbhar vendharvo, tena sukhe sukhi thavun, tena dukhe dukhi thavun te kai nanisooni vat nathi. Agadh prem vina avo bojo sha mate koie pan uthavvo joie? ¹
(Husband-wife stunningly stared at Kundan. Her point was as true as abrupt. 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.)

For years, Kundan has put on white clothes but now she starts wearing coloured clothes. She buys make-up articles and beautifies herself. She also learns the art of cooking. She becomes active in life. Leaving aside her modesty, she tells Shubhangi that she is very keen to get married. She tells Shubhangi, “ Shun lage chhe, Hun pan parni jau to?....” ² (What do you say about it? Should I marry? )

Shubhangi is surprised to see the change in Kundan:

“Shun?” Shubhangie poochhhyun. Kundane phari pachhun pelu aachhun, lajjashil smit karyun ane kahyu: “Mane thayun ke a lagna to karva jevu chhe! Mane ghana ghana vichar aavva mandya...” ³
(“What?” surprisingly asked Shubhangi. Kundan again smiled bashfully and said, I think this marriage is a venture to be in use. I am continuously brooding over it…)
Kundan gets her name registered in a pilgrimage- special lest she may have a partner. She thinks of giving an advertisement in matrimonial classified. Looking to the longing for the marriage of Kundan, Paresh introduces her to an elderly colleague of his office Mr. Parekh. As the developments are on to fulfil her aim of marriage, an obstacle occurs. Kundan inherits the property of an unknown lady called Baruadin Joans after the latter’s death. Kundan learns about her father’s love affair with this lady through the lawyer of the family. She is shocked and stops the step of her marriage. She tells Paresh-Shubhangi to vacate her house.

Kundan lived with her father for years and still she couldn’t know him fully. How can she then know Mr. Parekh, a totally stranger? This thought makes her cancel the idea of the marriage. She is disappointed very much. She feels that she could even not recognize her father with whom she passed her whole life. She says, “Juone, ratibhainiye mane khabar na padi...Aakhi jindagi sathe rahi toye! Hun koine nahi olakhi shaku, koini saithe nahi rahe shakun.... bas, Jivya karish aamne aam – kok divas to aa aandhali gali no ant avshene! ⁴ (Look, though I lived the whole life with Ratibhai, I could not know him. I shall not be able know anyone. I can’t live with anybody...Just be living and someday there will be end of this blind alley!)

In this way, she decides to live in ‘Aandhali Gali’, the dark street of life that is-andhali gali which is called blind alley- a street from where we can not come out. Now she does not want to trust anyone in life. She is again thrown away into the ‘Aandhali Gali’. Self awareness of a lady caused by the circumstances and destiny is revealed in this short novel.
Social Halo of *Aandhali Gali*:

Urban society is in the centre of this novel by Dhiruben Patel. The characters of the society positively help the theme. The halo of urban society is naturally revealed on account of the living style, speech, behaviour, tempers, activities etc. of the characters of rich communities of the society. The writer narrates the life of a lonely lady, i.e. the unmarried heroine. Detached from the social relations as Kundan is, her character has been developed well. After the death of Kundan’s mother Ratibhai, Kundan’s father, was all alone. He didn’t marry again just to save Kundan from the ill-treatment by a step mother. Kundan too didn’t marry for the happiness of her father. After the death of Ratibhai, Kundan passes her lonely life in ‘Kundan Villa’. As being the only daughter, she has been brought up with fondness. As Kundan has not entered into worldly life, she knows no cooking or house decoration. She gives an advertisement to get a tenant in her home just to avoid loneliness. She gets Paresh Desai as the tenant. She accepts him as the tenant when she hears the story of his love marriage with Shubhangi whom he is not in a position to call until he hires a house. This is the starting point of something ‘uncommon’ in the life of Kundan. Now she becomes conscious about her life looking to happy married life of Paresh-Shubhangi. She even prepares herself for the marriage. By this time she learns about the secret love affair of her father. This causes a turning point and she removes Paresh-Shubhangi from her house and lives lonely life in ‘Aandhali Gali’. Following the ideal of her father till the end, she spoils and wastes her own life though she lives in a rich society.

In the novel, Paresh-Shubhangi seem to be living a happy conjugal life after the separation for the years. Paresh has no house in a city like
Mumbai. He gets the place in ‘Kundan Villa’ facing many difficulties. As the society has not given consent to their marriage, they are forced to live as the tenants here and there. They have no child even after the ten years of their married life. Although they live as tenants in ‘Kundan Villa’, they become just like relatives of Kundan. But ultimately they are compelled to leave Kundan and her villa because of turning point in Kundan’s life.

Paresh has to work hard to face the conflict and live a regular married life in a city like Mumbai and still he remains unsuccessful. Kundan has passed B.A. Her father Ratibhai had paid attention to her studies as she was the only daughter. But she had been kept deprived of marriage. Though Kundan has got college education, she has ignored co-curricular activities. As she is very rich and only daughter, she has no problem regarding livelihood. Paresh-Shubhangi who have aroused unfulfilled desire in Kundan are both educated. The educated Paresh earns his livelihood in Mumbai.

Deep Reflection on Married Life:

In this novel the writer 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. Following the footstep of her father who doesn’t remarry for her happiness, Kundan too doesn’t marry though she is forty five. But the love story of Paresh arouses the feeling of love and marriage in Kundan and she becomes conscious about life. She takes interest in cooking, cosmetics and costumes. She does feel that she is not too late to get married She plans to marry and settle in life. Mr.Parekh, a widower serving with Paresh has interest in Kundan. She also meets him. But Baruadin Joans becomes the
obstacle and she again decides not to marry, all of a sudden her behaviour is changed. She becomes the same as she was before, a lonely lifeless bird. She also rejects the proposal of Mr. Parekh for marriage. Paresah and Shubhangi can not understand what has happened. In the end she explains everything about the unknown Christian woman, who had left some property and a flat for Kundan in her will. Kundan comes to know that she had relations with her father. Kundan is extremely shocked to know all these things. Now she can not see the happy and blissful conjugal life of Paresh and Shubhangi and makes them vacate her house. After years, happy meeting takes place in the life of Paresh-Shubhangi. Their parents have not given consent to their marriage. They render a court marriage. Ultimately Paresh gets both a job and a house. Though both of them are above 32-34, they have no issue. Still they are happy. Kundan, the heroine renders no job. She takes interest in the life of Paresh. Paresh gives a new idea to Kundan: “You are a B.A... At least you can educate somebody.” A turning point comes into the life of Kundan and she calls the neighbouring children and teaches them. She does this activity not to earn but to be free from her dull life.

In this way, the living characters of Mumbai like city cause the social halo of *Aandhali Gali*. Every character passes through the self-conflict. A question naturally arises: “Which is a happy character in the real sense of the term”. The life of Paresh-Shubhangi seems to be happy at first sight but the society has not given consent to their love marriage and they have to face separation. They meet and start living happily, Shubhangi becomes pregnant, and they are compelled to leave ‘Kundan Villa’. In the same way, Kundan is forty five and still she is not married. Ultimately she has to live a lonely life in ‘Kundan Villa’. Hers is really a tragic life.
The novel is divided into three chapters and it produces a coherent and well made novel. It has a very compact structure. Out of the three, the first chapter deals with Kundan’s advertisement in the newspaper, meeting with Paresh, Paresh’s entry in ‘Kundan Villa’ and arrival of Shubhangi in ‘Kundan Villa’. The second chapter describes happy conjugal life of Paresh- Shubhangi and how it arouses the desire for marriage in Kundan’s heart. The third chapter presents Kundan’s fanatical efforts to find a life partner and its tragic end with the will of Baruadin Joans

**Title of the novel:**

While analyzing a work of art, it is equally important to discus the title with other parameters. Dhiruben has given a quite appropriate and symbolic title to this psychological novel. Usually a street has two ends and both are open to enter or exit. But there are some streets or roads which have no open end. We can enter the street but can’t exit on the other end. Such a street is called blind alley in English. It is called aandhali gali (street) in Gujarati. Here in this novel the central figure is the character of Kundan. 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. Once the season has passed or the age to fall in love or marry is gone, it is not possible to reverse the situation. But at the age forty five all of a sudden, the company of the happy couple arouses the feeling of love and marriage in Kundan’s heart. But it is too late. All her efforts for love and marriage prove futile and she is again thrown into the same life of loneliness-‘aandhali gali’. She has to live the same dull and lonely life. She says, “.... bas, Jivya karish aamne aam –kok divas to aa aandhali
A striking characteristic of Dhiruben’s novels is the role of locations and buildings. They play a significant role in her novels. Sometimes they become living characters and make a tremendous effect on the mind of the readers. ‘Kundan Villa’, Kundan’s house plays a significant role in this novel. It is a shelter for Paresh-Shubhangi. The same house becomes just like prison for Kundan that is ‘aandhali gali’. The span of the novel takes place in the metropolitan city of Mumbai. Description of the city and some of its well-known places makes Mumbai a living character in the novel. The fantastic narration of the weather, traffic and hustling life of Mumbai is very impressive. The references of the Mahim church, Haji Ali and Siddhi Vinayak Temple give a realistic touch to the locations of Mumbai. The span of novel is spread from Borivali to Chopati and from Varli to Churchgate. Dhiruben describes the people at various places of Mumbai, “Ena e chahera 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! 6 (…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!)

Dhiruben uses very simple but effective language. She also uses some beautiful Gujarati sayings and proverbs. The symbol of creeper (plant) of Madhumalti and the metaphor of kite used to present Kundan are wonderful. Shubhangi waters the dead creeper of Madhumalti and it becomes alive. It symbolically presents that Kundan’s life also has
become active and colourful now. She is gradually coming out of the dull and lonely way of life in the company of this blessed couple. Paresh refers Kundan to the ‘kite’ in the beginning of the novel. As we know that a kite is a dull, unattractive and static bird. Some of the descriptions of the weather and places are very visual and creating the images before our eyes. The hot summer of Mumbai is described like this, “Mumbai shaherno May mas. Akashmathi aag nathi varasti, manasona sharirmathi tipun tipun thaine zare chhe.” (The month of May in Mumbai! it is not rain of fire from the sky but it drips from the bodies of the people.) She writes about the thirst in this season, “Aa samaye zer male to pan pi shakay, matra te thandu hovun joie.” (A person can drink even poison at this time but the only condition is that it should be cold)

Mumbai is so congested a city that it is very difficult to find a place there. Dhiruben writes when Paresh is in search of a shelter:

“Mare ahin paying guest tarike raheva aavvu chhe.”
“Ghana loko aavi gaya.”
“Pan mane bahuj jarur chhe.. mane nokari mali gai chhe. Matra rahevano savaal chhe.”
“badhane rahevano j savaal hoy chhe Mumbaima.”
(“I would like to stay as a paying guest here.”
“Many persons have approached regarding it.”
“But I need it badly. I have got a job. Lodging is the only problem.”
“In Mumbai, all have the problem of housing.”)

The traffic, hustling and bustling life of Mumbai descriptions of places, people, crowd give the novel a realistic touch. The fast and
struggling life of Mumbai is like this, “Lal light, lili light, ubha rahevun, pacchu dodavu, bhojraman utarvun, dadra chdva, vahnoma khadkavun, thalvavun, pachhu dodya karvun… aakhun shaher ek virat rafdo bani gayu chhe. 10 (Red light……green light….stop….run…..go down in the basement…climb the ladders…..be heap (get in)…. in the vehicles…..pour out (get out)…..run again…the whole city has become a large ant- hill) 

Some Gujarati expressions about women and their nature make the text interesting and effective: Strini ris juini suvas jevi chhe. Aave aave ne udi jay. 11 (A woman’s anger is like the smell of Jasmin, as you smell it….. it squanders away soon) tu ene kaheti kem nathi? Aavu badhu enekai shobhatu nathi. Ghardi ghodine lal lagam! 12 (Why don’t you persuade her? All such things do not look good on her part… just like, one has a cold tooth yet in one’s old head!) 

Thus the novelist marvellously describes an unmarried woman’s longing for marriage at the age of forty five. But it is too late now. She presents the issue psychologically. Aandhali Gali deserves a praiseworthy place in the history of Gujarati novel.
Kadambarini Maa

Kadambarini Maa was published in 1988. The novel basically deals with social perspectives. It is a fine example of the exposition of a woman who achieves independent status after a severe conflict in married life. Her mother-in-law Vijaya plays a very important role in it. We learn regarding the social customs through Aruna, the heroine kadambari’s mother. Aruna has five issues - Kadambari the last. Kadambari is a typical timid Indian wife, feeling safe among a lot of tyrannies of a drunkard husband. She has been married into a rich house. Kadambari has been brought up by Aruna in such a way that her self consciousness, self respect and a healthy relation have been blunted.

Kadambari’s husband is extremely rich. He is a man of bad habits. He is a drunkard and adulterous. He insults his parents. He beats his wife. Dhiruben describes the situation:


(But Kadambri’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 believes that her daughter is very happy because of ample money and ornaments. According to her, Kadambari’s husband is a perfect one. Her mother Aruna advises Kadambari to bear all the cruelties of her husband in the name of samskaras. Therefore, she sends her back to her father-in-law’s house giving her threats. As Aruna is interested in wealth of Anil, she can not realize the pathetic condition of Kadambari. She advises her daughter to connive at such things, ‘Ane e hammesha evu j shikhavati ke ‘e to hoy ! chalya kare! Aankh ada kan karvana! Ane Kadambari evu samji bethi hati ke aankh ada kan karva e j strina jivanni saphaltano payo chhe.¹⁴ (And she always taught her that ‘it’s a common phenomenon. Connive at such things. And Kadambari also believed that this is the key to be successful for a woman)

At last, Vijaya, Kadambari’s mother-in-law decides to do justice to her innocent daughter-in-law. Of course this is not easy. Her husband is crippled, her son Anil is out of control, her relatives are indifferent and Kadambari is soft and simple. Moreover Anil threatens her off and on. Still Vijaya does not give up. She teaches very important lessons to Kadambari, i.e. spirit of abandon and self respect. She says:

*Khulasna ka karish, kadamb! Marathi nahi sahevyay. Tare koine kasho khulaso nathi karvanyo. Jivvanu chhe, khumarithi jivvanu chhe. Anil kahe em nahi, Arunabahen kahe em nahi- tari jate, tane potane game tem jivvanu chhe....¹⁵*
(Do not explain anything Kadam. I can’t tolerate. You don’t have to make explanation to anybody. You have to live, live with self-respect. Don’t obey to Anil or Arunaben. You are to live as per your choice.)

But Kadambari lacks firm determination. She even tries to commit suicide but she is saved owing to intercession of Vijaya and Panna, Anil’s sister. Both Panna and Vijaya give her courage and explain the importance of a right goal of life:


(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.)

There is a sea-change in the life of Kadambari. We find the rays 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 awaken 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’.
'Maa pase nathi rahevun?'
'Maa pase j rahevu chhe, Anna! Aa mari maa pase! Kahi Kadambari Vijaya pase jai ubhi, ane boli, 'Rat-dahado faḍ-latman mare have nathi jivavu. Oshiyali thaine nathi rahevun. Mare jovu chhe-shodhavu chhe-'
'shun?'
'ke bhagvane mane sha ma te janma aapyo chhe?'
Kadambarina chahera par ek smit pragatyun. ¹⁷
(This is my decision. Now I will live here. I will live in my own way. 
Don’t you want to live with mother? 
I will live with mother, Anna but with this mother, so saying, she went to Vijaya and said, 'I don’t want to live in a panic for twenty four hours. I don’t want to be dependent, I want to find-
‘What?’
-‘that…. why God has given me birth’ A bright smile shone on the face of Kadambari.)

Dhiruben shows the conflict of a woman and how she passes successfully through all the buffets of life. The novel has a nice and well structured plot. Thus the novelist raises questions against the age-old pathetic condition of women and male dominance in Indian families. The creation of the character of Vijaya, the mother-in-law of Kadambari is extra ordinary. She behaves as the real mother and well wisher of Kadambari.
A Pen Picture of family relation of an uncommon nature:

*Kadambarini Maa* is the novel narrating an artistic exertion of the establishment of a female personality. This is the story of a helpless lady turning into the lady of independent nature supported by another lady. Kadambari’s character is a complex one, full of contradictory factors:

*Ene navai lagti hati ke Kadambari patino aavo vyavahar sha mate sahan kari le chhe? Sha mate kadi kasho pratikar nathi karti? Salamatini shodh ane samruddhino lobh shun strine aatli badhi pamar banavi de chhe?*  

(She was surprised to observe that why Kadambari tolerates such a cruel behaviour of her husband. Why does she not protest? Is it the sense of safekeeping and greediness for affluence that make the woman so timorous?)

The two different societies have been penned here. A grand big house of ‘*Ratanmenor*’ has been inherited to Vijaya from her mother as she was the only child. Vijaya had two sons Anil and Sunil and two daughters Panna and Neelam who had been married off abroad. Sunil had been studying medicine in a medical hostel. Girdharilal, her husband was a paralytic patient and she was in his service. Her elder son Anil was managing the entire business. The property of the house was under his control. This led him to an astray. He was not loyal to his wise and pious wife Kadambari. He was very cruel to her. She went to her parents’ house. This incident was eye opener to Vijaya. She decides to make her daughter-in-law free from the cruelty of her husband Anil. Vijaya’s domestic life is unhappy because her husband is a paralytic patient and
her son is extravagant and adulterous. Her daughter Panna has come back from Australia getting a divorce.

Aruna on the other side is a different kind of character. She is mother of five children. Three daughters have been married off. Kadambari is the last one for whom she has found out the boy from a very rich family. Aruna is greedy. She gives more importance to money. She ignores the unhappy life of her daughter. Still we find the change in her attitude at the end of the novel. Abhechand is Vijaya’s brother. He has three daughters- Laxmi, Sarita and Kanju. This is a very happy and blissful family. Kadambari finds for the first time selfless love, safety, freedom etc. in this family. She compares the happiness of this house with that of Anil’s house. Kadambari likes Kanju’s house without TV but full of religious atmosphere.

**Unhappy Conjugal life of Anil-Kadambari:**

The novel’s main focus is on the married life of Anil and Kadambari. In between, the novelist has touched the married life of Vijaya and Girdharilal. Girdharilal is bed-ridden due to paralysis. Leaving aside, the luxury of ‘Ratanmenor’ Vijaya lives with her husband in a single room. She constantly serves her husband and takes care of him. In such a testing period, she is loyal to her husband. Her love and sympathy for him know no bounds. She boldly faces the circumstances.

Though she lives in her room, she is not unaware of the ‘happenings of’ ‘Ratanmenor’. In the beginning, she just witnesses the tyranny, injustice and exploitation done to Kadambari by Anil. But when the plight of Kadambari reaches to the climax, Kadambari goes to her
parent’s house. Vijaya likes this gesture of Kadambari and she advises Aruna not to send her back to her own house. Vijaya wants to teach lessons to Anil. But Aruna doubts Vijaya.

Aruna thinks that she has found out a rich husband for her daughter. But in reality, Kadambari is not happy with him. He is drunkard and lacks good virtues. Kadambari is just a sex-satisfying toy for him. Her pathetic condition is described, “Anil sathe parnine te jāne potano ek manav tarikenā daraj jo khoi bethi hati. Matra ek sadhan bani gai hati. Anilna manma vare vare uthta krodhna, ghrunana ane kamana jabardasta tofanona pragtyanu.” 19 (After her marriage with Anil she had lost her status as a human being. She had just become the means…the means satisfying the anger, hatred, and lust of Anil.)

In normal circumstances he hates and detests her. Kadambari suffers the ill-treatment of her husband as she is timid and immature due to her mother’s improper upbringing. Therefore she bears the insults and injustice done to her by Anil when she sees the bundles of currency notes or she is in an air-conditioned car of Anil.

Ultimately Kadambari tries to commit suicide but she is saved by the attempts of Vijaya and Panna. At last she gains her self confidence. She becomes a changed lady, a new lady having freedom and her own individuality. Panna is a minor character of this novel. She is settled in Australia. She is happy with Vipin, her husband. She has a handsome son called Shashank. But a turning point takes place in her life. Her husband is attracted to a beautiful lady called Esmeralda. Vipin forgets Panna and decides to marry Esmeralda. Panna, therefore, comes back to India with
her son Shashank. Panna proves to be a source of shelter for Kadambari. Panna guides her properly.

**The Revelation of some Social Beliefs:**

The reputation of a mother-in-law in Indian society has been bad for centuries. She is looked upon as a cruel ‘animal’. Folk-lore is the proof. Even a sister-in-law is considered to be dangerous. This social belief has been exposed in many Gujarati literary works. In this novel Aruna, the mother of Kadambari also criticizes Vijaya, the mother-in-law of Kadambari. She tells Kadambari that her mother-in-law is very cunning. Of course, this is far from truth. On the contrary she helps Kadambari to be free from the evil condition she is in.

Aruna represents the old beliefs of the society. She advises Kadambari to be calm, dumb and obedient to elders and to her husband. Owing to such beliefs she is sympathetic to Kadambari though she knows Kadambari is not happy. Of course the novelist tries to break these social beliefs.

**Characterization:**

Dhiruben Patel is an excellent novelist. She has a knack of creating interesting characters. In this novel Aruna, Vijaya, Kadambari and Panna are very interesting female characters. On the other hand, Anil’s character seems to be a living character. Anil symbolizes all the vices of a wealthy man’s uncontrolled son. Anil is intelligent but he prostitutes his talent. He marries Kadambari but he is not a loyal husband. He is very cruel to her. He also cheats his parents. He can’t manage the property and
business he has inherited. Hence he becomes as good as bankrupt. He therefore tries to entrap Kalindi, a rich lady Shakuntala’s daughter by marrying her. Kadambari’s sorrows and sufferings know no bound because of such a bad husband:

‘Nahi ba.. – Anil kahe emaj karya karvanun. Annane ej game chhe.’
‘Ane Kadambarine?’
‘Kone- mane?’
‘han.’
‘Mare shun gamva na gamvanun? Mare to aa loko jivade em jivvanun. Mar kahe to mari javanun, bijo rasto j kya chhe mari pase?’

(No…mother -I have to obey Anil completely. Anna also likes it.’
‘And what about you?’
‘Whom- me?’
‘yes.’
‘I am not supposed to have likes or dislikes. I have to live my life as per their wishes. I have to die if they so desire. I do not have any alternatives.)

But ultimately Vijaya, her mother-in-law comes to her rescue and Kadambari gains her freedom.

Aruna is a typical woman giving more importance to money ignoring human values. She marries off her daughter Kadambari to Anil only because he has ample money, ornaments and a car. When kadambari complains about the vices of her husband, Aruna advises her to overlook
them. “Anil is a wealthy man and some vices are but natural for him”—this type of advice is given to Kadambari by Aruna. Dhiruben narrates, *Anna! Kadambari boli. Choop! Ekdam chup thai ja! Ane kadambari choop thai gai. Balpanthi aamaj chalyu aavtu hatun.*  

(Arna! said Kadambari. Be Quiet! Keep quiet completely! And Kadambari became silent. This was the tradition since childhood.)

Aruna is never worried about the sufferings of her daughter. She is so foolish that she can not know the wicked schemes of her son-in-law Anil. Not only that but she has sympathy for him and supports him. When Vijaya tries to help Kadambari, Aruna doubts her sincerity.

Vijaya’s character is very appealing, she represents a strong woman. Her life is full of struggles but she does not give in. Her husband Girdharilal is a paralytic patient and is bed-ridden. She serves her husband sincerely. Though she lives in a separate room of ‘Ratanmenor’ her eyes are on the happenings of her big house. She is well aware of the vices of her son Anil. She feels herself responsible for this condition of Kadambari. She thinks that she could take care of her husband but she had failed as a mother:

*E badhu hun bhooli gai. mara manthi em ke mari chakarithi e saja thai jashe. Chovis kalak ek sarkhu bas emnamaj dhyan ! Jane mare biji koi jindagi chhej nahin. Hun stri nathi, maa nathi, matra patni chhun. Ek ardhachetan, ardhajad dehni ardhangini!*  

(I forgot all those things…… I thought that he will be well with my care. I constantly spent all my twenty four hours for him as if I have no personal life of my own. I
am not a woman…I am not even a mother. I am simply a wife……. better half of a half-dead, paralytic body.)

When Kadambari is unable to tolerate the cruelty of her husband and runs away to her parents’ house, Vijaya takes her side and guides her properly to become an independent lady. In this way Vijaya proves to be a very bold character of this novel. Panna, Girdharilal, Sunil, Abhechand etc. are minor characters. Of course Panna’s role appeals to the reader. Anil represents the wicked human being. He is the symbol of the age-old male dominance in Indian society. He considers himself the ‘owner’ of his wife, ‘Kadam…Kadambari mari Bairi chhe. Enu nam chhe Kadam-Kadambari! Ene marun kahyun manvanun. Hun kahu tem karvanu. Utha kahu to uthvanun. Bes kahu to besvanun. Nach kahu to nachvanu!’

(Kadambri is my wife. Her name is Kadamb……Kadambari. She has to obey my orders. She has to do whatever I say. If I say ‘stand up’, she has to stand up. She has to sit or dance as per my orders.)

The character of Panna is minor. Yet she represents a self-esteem lady. Though she is happy with her husband in Australia, she leaves him when he is interested in other woman. She is the reflection of her mother Vijaya. She becomes angry with Kadambari for her fearful nature, “aamey jivati rahiney shun karvani chhun?’ Pannane khoob gusso avyo. Potana deshni lakho-karodo strio jevunj aa bhabhi bolti hati.” (What is use of my life?’ Panna got angry. Her sister-in-law was speaking in the same way as the other lacks of women of her country.)

She saves Kadambari’s life when she tries to commit suicide. Kadambari is a helpless woman. She is the protagonist. She knows that she is so passive and fearful.
All the characters of the novel face different types of conflict. Neither of them is completely happy. The novelist seems to be suggesting that our life is not a bed of roses. It is full of thorns. Be ready to face troubles and tribulations, worries and vexations, problems and perplexities, difficulties and dangers. Yet through the character of Vijaya, the author gives an optimistic message that life is a wonderful thing, we must live it in full:

*Aa duniya ghani moti chhe... Ghana badha manaso chhe. Ema ghanu badhu thay chhe. Navun navun, vichitra, chmatkarik, aahladak! E haji tare jovanu chhe, janvanun che. Janmayano aanand manvano chhe, jivyano utsav ujavvanochhe.*

(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.)

**Title of the Novel:**

*Kadambarini Maa* is story of a new birth of a woman. There is no force of revolt but a woman firmly and mutely opposes another suppressing woman. Kadambari’s real mother is Aruna who has given her birth but her true mother is her mother-in-law, Vijaya who inspires the spirit of self respect in Kadambari. Aruna, her mother is a typical timid woman. She finds happiness in money and jewels. Anyhow she wants to send back Kadambari to her husband’s home. Dhiruben describes Aruna’s mentality, “*Kadambari sauthi nani hati ane tene*
vahali pan hati. Chhata tenun aa paglun ene nahotun gamyun. Aam sasrethi bhagi aavvun bilkul thik na kahevay. Aatlu Paisadar sasrun kai saune nathi maltu.”  

(Kadambari was the youngest one and she was dear to her. Yet she did not like this step of Kadambari. It is not good at all to run away from the in-laws’ home. All girls are not fortunate enough to have such rich in-laws.)

Aruna taught Kadambari to suffer all the tyrannies as woman since her childhood. She can not realize Kadambari’s intolerable life. She sends back Kadambari to her husband. Actually she wanted to make her daughter happy in a wealthy family but she is foolish and ignorant that she can not know the conspiracy of the cunning and cruel Anil. But it is Vijaya who desperately struggles and even takes a great risk to make her daughter-in-law happy in the real sense of the term. She tells to Kadambari, “Kadamb! Ane have ek vat yad rakhje- ghar chhodi daine nahin, gharma rahinej aapne aapni rite jivvanu chhe. Aapne potane mate jivvanun chhe.  

(Kadamb! Now remember one thing- We do not have to leave this house. We have to live in this house and that too in our own way. We have to live for ourselves.)

Kadambarini Maa is completely an appropriate title to this novel. The character of Vijaya is very effective and impressive. Kadambari is the protagonist. But the crucial role is played by Vijaya. It is Vijaya, who awakens the spirit of self-respect and gives a new birth to Kadambari. She is nowhere extreme yet she is the symbol of real ‘Shakti’ -Powerful woman.

Dhiruben uses simple but effective language. Some of the phrases symbols, references make the impact heart touching. The use of sayings
and proverbs is another characteristic of her language. To show the mentality or nature of the characters Dhiruben uses beautiful examples. As she has mastery over mentality of women, let’s read a fine example of it: *Chhokarionu rudan chepi hoy chhe. Kunju sathe Sarita ne Sarita sathe Laxmi ne laxmi sathe Kadambari em badhae radva mandyun.* 28 (Girls’ cry is infectious. As Kunju began to cry, Sarita joined her and following Sarita, Laxmi, Kadambari and all began crying.)

Dhiruben presents a mother’s agony beautifully while Vijaya regrets for her son’s character, ‘*Potana j dikranu charitravakhandan karnari maa duniyani aathmi ajayabi kahevay.*’ 29 (A mother criticizing the immoral character of her own son can be called the eighth wonder of the world!) Another example is of Vijaya who considers herself responsible for such a wicked son and regrets for her own carelessness in upbringing him. It is expressed wonderfully with the allusion of the great Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata,* ‘*Ha Gandhari e jo pata na bandhya hot to kadach Duryodhan aavo kukarmi na thayo hot.*’ 30 (If Gandhari had not closed her eyes with a strip, perhaps Duryodhan would not have been so sinful.)

Kadambari is used like a rag and thrown away by Anil. Kadambari is well aware of her condition. But she is helpless. She regrets:

*Hun maro vichar karu chhnun. Pannaben! Hun aavi kem chhun?*

‘kevan?’

*Bathroomna barnani bahar padeli lambgolakar gulabi rangni runchhavali nani gadli taraf Kadambari e aangali chindhi.*
E pagluchhniya tarike vaprati hati. 31
(I am thinking about myself, Pannaben! Why am I of this kind?
‘Of what kind?’
Kadambari pointed towards a small soft padded pink seat near the door of the bathroom. It was used as door-mat.)

Thus Dhiruben is nowhere at extreme in presenting the pathetic condition of a woman in the male dominated family of Anil. Yet she revolts against such a society where an innocent bride like Kadambari has to suffer. Through the character of vijaya, Dhiruben has presented her message regarding women awareness and her philosophical vision. Through the variety of characters, Dhiruben has successfully presented her views in this novel. Kadambarini Maa deserves a creditable position in the history of Gujarati novel.
*Hutashan*

*Hutashan* was published in 1993. It depicts a woman’s struggle for self-respect and self esteem. It shows a mother’s supreme sacrifice for the happiness for her son. Vatsala, the protagonist of the novel is a loyal wife, loving mother and an ideal Indian woman. Her family is happy and prosperous. She has the only son called Ashish. Vatsala is in search of an ideal daughter-in-law. She has a keen desire to make her daughter-in-law very happy. She wants to become an ideal mother-in-law. Thus Vatsala is a very good lady having noble views and virtues.

They are an ideal family. Ashish is an ideal son and loves his parents. But he selects his life-partner Shephali without consulting his parents. Of course, the parents welcome the decision of their son. But Shephali proves to be a very bad wife. She is quarrelsome and she hates vatsala. She constantly insults her in presence of others. Vatsala is very much worried about the happiness of her son. Therefore she quietly suffers the ill-treatment of Shephali. Even Ashhish is not with her. He knows that Shephali’s behaviour with his mother is extremely bad. He therefore, decides to divorce but his mother prevents him to do so. Vatsala heartily wishes to see the happy conjugal life of her son and Shephali. Hence she decides to leave her house and live separately with her husband Rohit in a place like Panchgini.

**Focus on Conjugal Life:**

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.
There is a great love between Vatsala and Rohit, her son. She says on silver jubilee celebration of her wedding anniversary, “Aa kain lagna nathi, pachis varsa pahela thayela lagnani ujavani chhe” 32 (This is not a marriage; it is a celebration of the marriage organized twenty five years ago.)

On the contrary, the conjugal life of her son Ashish is very distressful. He has no even twenty five days of happy married life. With in two-three months of marriage he is prepared to take divorce. Shephali proves a bad woman. Dhiruben describes: Jindagini baji e hari gayo hato. Ekaj bhool ane’….33 (He had lost the game of life. Only one error and...)

**Characterisation:**

Vatsala is the most important character in the novel. She is very loving and kind woman. She is a perfect wife. She takes care of all and makes the house ‘a home’ in real sense of the term. Vatsala has a dream to see a very happy conjugal life of her only son Ashish. She tires her utmost to treat her daughter-in-law as her own daughter. But Shephali proves to be an evil lady. She insults her mother-in-law off and on. Vatsala’s dream is shattered. Vatsala makes a great sacrifice. She along with her husband Rohit decides to leave the house just for the sake of her son’s happiness. Vatsala is the most interesting and impressive character in the novel. Rohit is living a completely blissful life with her. Vatsala always has a loving smile on her face. Dhiruben describes, “E smitni ek khoobi hati. Je jue te eni khushbo haiyaman sachvine lai jai shake...... darekne emaj thay ke a smit mare mate j chhe, fakta mare mate!” 34 (The smile had a unique trait, whoever sees it, can take its fragrance with him
carefully treasured in one’s heart. Everyone feels that this smile is for him…. Only for him.)

Vatsala is very loving lady. She loves all. Dhiruben points out, “Bahu komal chhe Vatsala. Bahu umda hruday chhe enu. Aakhi duniyana loko samai jai toye ventbhar jagya baki rahe etlu vishal.” 35 (Vatsala is very soft. She has a noble heart. It is so large that it includes all, and yet it has some space.) Vatsala is a successful home maker. She never tires of her routine house hold work. She works very hard to maintain the happiness of the family. Ashish says: Ey tarun ajab chhe, ho, mummy! Tu kem kyarey jara pan mandi nathi padti?” 36 (It is so strange about you! Mother! How come it is so that you never fall ill?)

Vatsala has love for all. She is a successful wife. She takes care of all. She loves all people. Even a servant feels that he is the member of the house. She takes care of her servant and considers him as one of the family members:

“Ashishbhai me to dava kyarniye lidhi chhe!”
Rajue kahyun.

“Em? Mane to mummy e kahyun etle hun avyo.”

“Amma badhano khyal rakhe chhe! Maro ne tamaro to rakhej- pan badhano dhobi, mali, driver, postman, darji... are bap re kono nathi rakhtan?” 37
(Ashishbhai, I took my medicine’, said Raju
‘Okay, mother told me to remind you about it.’
‘Mother takes care of all! …..And especially of you and me. She also cares for the washer man, gardener, driver, postman, tailor …. Oh! My God she takes care of so
many people. There is no one who is not taken care of by her.

She does not know practical worldly matters. She is honest in her views whereas Rohit is very practical man, “Ame businessma hamesha non-kamital rahie. Ha ke na kai chokkho javab aapie j nahine! ‘Rohit! I am not a businesswoman’.” (In business we never do commit. We never respond clearly! “Rohit! I am not a businesswoman”.)

Vatsala has many dreams about her daughter-in-law. She wants to become the best mother-in-law in the world. She plans to welcome her daughter-in-law as her own daughter in the house:

Vahu pan aakhre to ek nankadi chhokari j chhe. Aapna dikrano hath pakdine e sharmati gabhrati gharne umbrae aavine ubhi rahe chhe, ene mokale hathe ne mokale haiye avkar kem na aapvo? Ene potana kutumbani j ek vyakti-svajan kem na banavi devi?.....
‘Vatsala e manoman vichryun ke pote jagatni sarvreshtha sasu banshe’

(After all the daughter-in-law is also a little girl. She comes bashfully at the door step of our home holding the hand of our son, she should be welcomed heartily. Why should we not make her a member of our family…?
‘Vatsala thought that she will become the best mother-in-law in the world.)

Vatsalane thayun, hun pan aamaj jivish. Badhane chhayo aapish. Badhane samavi laish..
(Vatsala thought, ‘I shall also live in this way. I shall take care of all. I shall provide shelter to all. I shall accept all.)

The novel is an example of supreme sacrifice of a mother for the happiness of her son. She abandons the comforts of a luxurious house and cares for the sake of her son. Really the mother is always sacrificing one. Vatsala is one of such great ideal mothers. Till the end Vatsala does not lose hope. She thinks that Shephali will be all right. Dhiruben compares her spirit with the desperate efforts of the spider that continues his efforts yet falls on the earth so many times, “Bhoye padelo karoliyo pachho ashano tantu vanva lagyo.”  

(41) (The fallen spider on the ground, once again started to weave the string of hope.)

In male characters, Rohit and Ashish are important characters. These father and son are not so intimate with each other. Rohit has great worldly understanding. He is outspoken but honest. Rohit is rather reserved and rude. The role of Rohit is not as important as Vatsala. His married life with Vatsala has been very happy for twenty five years. They have blissful life. Rohit tells Vatsala, “Tu mane etali vahali chhe-mara manma je aave te tane janavya vina na rahi shaku.”  

(42) (You are so dear to me that I tell you everything I have in my mind.) Rohit needs Vatsala and her love, “Rohit rukhas manas hato. E same malki shakto nahi. Pan ene e smitni jarur hati-lagbhag pranvayu jetli j.”  

(43) (Rohit is an arid fellow. He could not respond a smile. But he needed that smile; he needed it as much as oxygen.)

Rohit is a loving husband. He loves his wife very much. They have a very good understanding. He is a much matured person. As he is a successful businessman, he can know people well. In the first visit he
opines that Shephali and her parents are not good people. They are not worth to be their relative. The writer states Rohit’s observation, “Ene to shephalina gharmathi bahar nikaltani sathej tadaka bhadaka karva mandya. ‘sav pittal chhe, pital!” 44 (As soon they came out of the house of Shephali he began to speak loudly with contempt, ‘rubbish! They are third class people.) But as soon as Shephali comes as a wife in the family, the fire starts. Rohit’s opinion about Shephali is never good.

Ashish is a young man of twenty three. He is an engineer. He is an example of an ideal son. He loves her mother very much. His respect for his mother is really exemplary:

“Tane page lagvanun rahi gayun hatun. Mummy!”
“Aaje chale!”
“Na chale…koi divas na chale!” 45
(‘I forgot to bow down you, mother!’
‘It will do, today.’
‘No, it will not do….. never…”)

Ashish is always obedient to his parents and particularly to his mother, Vatsala. Of course, he makes a great blunder as he doesn’t take his parents’ advice regarding Shephali and decides to marry her. But he knows that her behavior with her mother is not good, he is ready for the divorce. In this way he is a loving and ideal son. He is a sentimental boy. His love and respect for his mother has no end. He says, “Na hum, mari mummy kai evi nathi” To kevi chhe?” “Bahuj j saras! Duniyama koini n ahoy evi”. 46 (No, my mother is not of that type. Then what type of is she?” ‘Very nice! No one has such mother in the world.)
He likes Shephali and marries her. But this marriage proves a fatal decision of his life. His blissful family comes under shadow of distress. He can’t know the wicked woman. Shephali is such a bad woman that she insults the most loving and caring lady like Vatsala off and on: *Ene vali tun na game? E bane j kai rite? Aa duniyama koi pan manas evun na hoy ke jene tu na game*” 47 (Won’t she like you? How is it possible? There can’t be anybody in this world who would not like you)

The character of Shephali symbolizes a bad wife. She constantly calls bad names to her mother-in-law. She neither loves nor respects Ashish after the marriage. When Ashish knows that his parents are prepared to leave the house because of the bad behaviour of his wife, he is shocked. He worships his mother Vatsala. So he decides to take divorce, but Vatsala prevents him to do so. In her own house vatsala is insulted and humiliated by Shephali in presence of all:

“*Oh! I don’t cook.*”


(‘Oh! I don’t cook.’

“Don’t worry! My mother will gradually teach you everything. Okay mother? “

Shephali rudely responded, ‘I shall learn from my mother. You need not worry.’)

Raju and Sakharam are the servants and are the minor characters.
Plot of the novel:

The novel has a nice plot. It is very simple and coherent. It is divided into eight chapters. The novel begins in merriment mood with silver jubilee celebration of wedding of Vatsala and Rohit. It shows happy and successful conjugal life of Rohit and Vatsala. It also exposes the great intimacy and love between Vatsala and her son Ashish. At the end of the first chapter Ashish asks Vatsala for her view about Shephali who was among the guests tonight. The marriage of Ashish, Shephali’s prejudice and hatred for mother-in-law- Vatsala, the quarrelsome incidents, cunningness and schemes of Shephali, Ashish’s pathetic condition, Vatsala’s desperate efforts to tackle the situation, Ashish’s preparedness to take divorce but Vatsala’s sacrifice for the happiness of her son are the incidents that take the novel to climax. Finally, the novel ends with Vatsala’s decision to leave the house and live separately with Rohit. All the incidents of the novel are interwoven with the main thread of the story.

Title of the novel:

The title of the novel proves to be very befitting and appropriate as Hutashan-‘Fire’ is caused by the daughter-in-law. It was a happy and ideal family before the entry of Shephali in the house. Vatsala is very loving and kind woman. It is Vatsala who makes the house ‘home’ in real sense of the term. She tries her utmost to keep Shephali happy. But she is charged intensely for her goodness. She passes her life in intolerable situation. She does not show anybody that she is living an intolerable life. In her own house she was insulted and humiliated by Shephali in presence of her friends. Vatsala feels, “mo par dhadadhad tamacha padta
(Somebody was slapping severely on the face and yet she had to keep a smiling face. That was the expectation of the society - family and of Rohit.)

When she leaves the home for the sake of happy married life of her son, Ashish can realize that she has given supreme sacrifice for his happiness. Dhiruben narrates it wonderfully:

*Garud jevi pankho prsarine 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.***
(My mother has flown farawa y 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.)

 Really she has to suffer the agony of fire-hutashan. The happy family like heaven is turned into hell. A rare mother-in-law like Vatsala has to leave her own house after facing a lot insults. Thus it is a quite suitable title.

**Author’s Vision of Life:**

Dhiruben has a clear concept of creation. All her novels present her views about life. After all, a work of art is the reflection of living life.
Dignity of human life, self respect, and self esteem etc. are the favourite phrases of Dhiruben. As our life is full of ups and downs, it has many complexities and tribunals. Vatsala consoles Aashish, “taro ema vank nathi. Aa jindagi...jindagi evi vastu chhe ke koine shanti thi raveva na de” 51 (You are not at fault. This life……the life is of that type. It does not let live anybody peacefully.)

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, “Aa sansarni darekedarek parishhitino ukel hoy chhej……bhole dukhdayak lage, pan hoyaj ...shodhi kadhvano.” 52 (Every problem has a solution in this world. It may look difficult… but it is there…Do find out.)

Dhiruben has masterful grip over language. Some of the incidents are narrated dramatically. While reading the novel, they create a visual image before our eyes. Ashish presents her loving mother a diary on her 25th wedding anniversary. It has a citation in the handwriting of Ashish. It shows a great bond between the son and the mother, “Mara jivanno e dhruv taro chhe- mari maa!” 53 (It is the constant shining-powerful star of my life-She is my mother!)

Some of the other examples of her picturesque narrations are there. Vatsala’s confused mind is presented wonderfully, “Andar purai gayela bhamrana bharthi jem kamalni dandali varamvar kampi uthe chhe- kaik tevuj mannu thayu chhe. 54 (As the stem of lotus vibrates due to the weight of the wasp closed in it, same is the state of mind.),“kanta na khava hoy to gulabno moh jato karvo pade” 55 (If one does not want to bear the thorns, one should not expect for a rose.) Vatsala’s home is
reported, “Aa ek saras ghar chhe. Ahin nokar pan mokla mane hasi shake chhe. Ahin koi pan hasi shake-.” 56 (This is a beautiful home. Even a servant can laugh freely here. Anybody can laugh here-) , “Pan na tane madhnun tipun banvani aadat chhe. Makhio bhegi thay ane banbanya kare te tane game chhe.” 57 (But you like to be a drop of honey; you enjoy the bees humming and flying around you.), Ghana badha vakhat pachhi dhadam daine moto avaj thayo ane tyar pachhi shanty pathrai gai. 58 (After a long while there was a big sound of bang followed by complete silence.)

When the situation is very terrible Vatsala decides to end the quarrel with Shephali at any cost. She is ready to leave her own home. Dhiruben describes it effectively, “Jindagino anta aave te posay pan jindagini kurupta na posay.” 59 (The end of life can be accepted but not the malice of life.) She describes the nature of Rohit perfectly, “Ene jani lidhu kea aato haji sharuaat hati. Ena bhola Mahadevji haji ghanu kahevana hata.” 60 (She knew well that this is just the beginning. Her innocent Mahadevji was to speak a lot yet.) (Mahadev-Shankar is one of the three main gods of Hindu mythology.)

When Vatsala firmly realizes that shephali is really a bad woman. There is no possibility of happy conjugal life between Ashish and her wife. Dhiruben describes the situation in simply a single sentence: Jindagini baji e hari gayo hato. Ek aj bhool ane-.” 61 (He had lost the game of life. Only one error and...-)

Ashish knows well that Shephali hates his mother. He informs Vatsala, “She hates you like poison”. Dhiruben uses many English phrases as the characters of the novel are well-educated and from upper
middle class. i.e.; “What do you mean?”, “Ashish, you must apologize and ask him to stay”, “You are the wonderful”, “Everybody is wonderful on this earth”, “I don’t cook”, “You need not worry” etc.

Shephali’s mother advises her regarding the control in the house. Shephali is completely under the control of her cunning mother. All the time, she is guided by her mother. This is wonderfully narrated with the use of proverbial expression, “Shephali haji telefonene valgi rahi hati. Dordane pele chhedethi koi tipun tipun zer redi rahyu hatu ena kanma." ⁶² (Shephali was yet engrossed in telephone and from the other end of the cable somebody was pouring poison in her ears drop by drop.), “Rohit kai samajto nathi. Ek myanma be talvar mavani nathi.” ⁶³ (Rohit doesn’t understand it. Two things can not occupy the same space at the same time.)

*Hutashan* is a good example of a woman’s struggle for self-respect and self esteem. It shows a mother’s supreme sacrifice for the happiness for her son. *Hutashan* is given an admirable position in the history of Gujarati novel.
Aagantuk

Aagantuk was published in 1996. This is an excellent novel by Dhiruben Patel. She has imagined a situation in this novel, ‘What can happen if a Sanyasin (recluse) comes back after fifteen years of renunciation?’ In the prologue of this novel Dhiruben narrates, “Roshnithi Zalhalta khandman jameli mahefilman baharna andhkarmathi udine aavelun ek pakshi ek bariethi praveshi biji bariethi nikali jay etlasamayni aa vat.” (A bird coming from the darkness of the outside enters a room full of light and festivity; it enters from a window and exits from another window. This is the only span of the story.)

This novel won the Darshak Foundation Award in 1995 and it was given the most prestigious Central Academy Award in 2002. This novel attracts all people. It is appreciated by all. It is story of spiritual journey of the protagonist, Ishan. He is a Youngman. He is a B.A.. After the death of his mother, Ishan goes to an Ashram in Uttarkashi and becomes a Sanyasi (recluse). His Guru-Religious Head, Omkargiri loves and trusts him. After his death, he wanted to make Ishan the head of the Ashram. But when Omkargiri is no more, an ashram fellow Pratagiri makes an intrigue to become the head. Ishan is truly religious. He has no ambition. He leaves both, the Ashram and the Sanyasa. After fifteen years he comes back home to Mumbai. His two brothers Ashutosh and Arnav are suspicious to see him. They exhibit coldness in receiving him. Their wives Reema and Shalmali don’t like his arrival.

Ishan realizes that Ashutosh-Reema and Arnav-Shalmali are not interested in him. Still he is not disturbed. He decides to get settled somewhere else. As he is truly religious he blames nobody. Of course,
Ashutosh has both love and sympathy for his brother but his wife is firm not to keep him with them. Hence Ashutosh puts him to Arnav’s house. But neither Arnav nor his wife wants him in the house. They treat him coldly. They arrange to keep him in the room of their servant Fransis. But Fransis becomes the devotee of ishan.

Nirjanbhai, a good-richman lives on the upper floor of the same building. His daughter Ipsita and son Rajat met Ishan in Uttarkashi. They lived in the same Ashram in past. So they request him to stay with them in their house. Ishan responds positively. Rajat has been ill. Ishan cures him by repeated prayers. This is taken as a miracle. So many people come to Ishan for Darshana. Now Ashutosh-Reema and Arnav-Shalmali are ready to keep Ishan with them. But Ishan understands the vanities of the world. Niranjanbhai, Ipsita and Rajat really love and respect him. But Ishan is free from the attachments. Another ashram fellow Somgiri comes to Ishan and requests him to comeback and to manage the Ashram. As Pratapgiri is not a real hermit. But Ishan persuades him to go back and keep faith in Guru. Finally he leaves Mumbai and goes to Brindaban to live the life of a real recluse.

_Aagantuk_ is a good example of Dhiruben’s maturity as an author. She has presented two worlds -the world of worldly people and the world of a truly religious man. In this world of worldly people a person like Ishan feels that he is an outsider- aagantuk. _Aagantuk_ is a unique creation in the history of Gujarati Novel.
Presentation of Selfish and Hypocrite Family Relations:

On the very first day of the arrival of Ishan from the Ashram of Uttarkashi his selfish brothers show him cold shoulder. They are not prepared to keep him till he settles in this new life. Dhiruben has exposed the selfishness and hypocrisy of the so called practical man of contemporary society. Ashutosh telephones Arnav and asks him to share this responsibility:

‘Arnav! E aavi gayo chhe!’
‘Hen? kevo lage chhe? Shun? kai bolyo-ketlu rahevano chhe, shun karvano chhe?’
‘Na. me poochhyun pan nathi.’
‘Barabar.’
‘Aa kai mara eklani javabdari nathi, samje chhene?’
‘Ha, pan tame mota – ’
‘tethi shun thai gayu? tu aave chhene?’

(‘Arnav! He has arrived.’
‘Yeah!..How does he look? Did he say that how long he will stay? What he will do.’
‘No. I did not even ask him.’
‘Okay.’
‘This is not responsibility of mine only.’
‘Yes, but as you are elder brother…-
‘So what? Are you coming?’

In our country we entertain the guest as God. The maxim of ‘Athithi devo bhava’ (Guest is God) is a tradition in our country. These brothers forget our great Samskara of Atithi devo bhav. Ashutosh directly
shows his detest for Ishan, ‘To shun? Tare vichrvun joie. Amari pan kai musibato hoy, amari javabdario hoy...amne fave em chhe ke nahin e tare jovu joiene?’ 65 (What? You should see. We also have problems and other responsibilities. You should consider whether it is convenient or not.)

Ishan was not even a guest, he was their brother. The height of selfishness is seen among these so called cultured people when Arnav’s wife Shalmali arranges for Ishan to stay with their servant in a small room in their large luxurious flat though they have an extra guest room. But these shameless brothers forcefully invite Ishan to stay with them when Ishan is respected as miraculous saint and worshipped by people. Ashutosh forces Ishan to comeback to his house. Because they are interested in prosperity and fame that Ishan will pursue in future:

Ishan, men tara meditation classes mateni badhi taiyari kari nakhi chhe. I will manage the whole show.................. I tell you, you will be famous in this city. Ishan, joje to kharo, with proper publicity bhalbhala rustam tane ahin page padta aavshe? ’ 66

(Ishan! I have completed all the preparations for your meditation classes. I will manage the whole show. …… I tell you, you will be famous in this city. Ishan! I am sure that due to proper publicity the distinguished personalities will come there and will bow down you.)

Ahin taro evo deluxe Ashram thashe ke na puchho vat.’ 67

(A deluxe Ashram will be built for you. It will be so beautiful that even you won’t believe it)
Varu, pan pacchi to tare aavij javanu Ishan! Aapnun ghar hoy ne tu bijane tyan rahe te kevun lage... 68
(Okay, but now come with us, Ishan. We have our own house and you stay at other’s house, it looks strange.)

Satire of contemporary Social Milieu:

The Indianness of Dhiruben is seen in her treatment of the credulous and superstitious people of India. They believe in any Sadhus and, any fraudulent can easily impose upon them and make them worship him as Guru. The best example of such exposition is R.K. Narayan’s novel, Guide. Similarly here Ishan has a chance to deceive the people quite easily; they worship him; heap food and other offerings upon him. Dhiruben makes a scathing satire on such so called Swamijis and Babas who cheat the distressed superstitious people. Isahan is surprised to see it:

Aa bapji banvanun bahun agharun nathi. Loko jatjatni pida bhogvata hoy chhe. Doobato manas tarnun jhale em je kai kaho te svikari le. Ek bholpan hoy chhe. Ek shraddha hoy chhe......koi pan rite aadarpatra bani gayeli vyaktio aa manavyaparno labh lai potanun aasan jamavi dechhe. 69
(It is not difficult to play the role of a Baba (saint). People have various types of problems. As a drowning man catches a straw, they accept whatever we say. They have innocence and faith. The so called respected people misuse this mentality of the people and make their position sound.)
The plot of the novel:

The plot of the novel is straight forward and uncomplicated. The novel is divided into six chapters. The flashback technique is used but it does not take the reader to the spot. It is narrated by the author or presented through the waves of thoughts in the mind of Ishan. Dhiruben is the omniscient author writing in the third person and thus following the traditional and conventional mode narration. Chapter one describes that Ishan comes back from Ashram. His brothers show cold response. Ishan realizes it and plans to settle any how. Second Chapter narrates how Ishan realizes the real situation. Through flashback Ishan’s Ashram life and his Guru’s preaching is reminded. It shows how Pratapgiri’s envy and scheme made Ishan leave sanyasi life and the Ashram. In the following chapter quarrel is created by Reema in Ashtosh’s home. She is not ready not to keep him. Ashutosh takes Ishan to Arnav’s house. By chance Ishan comes into contact with the richman, Niranjanbhai and her daughter, Ipsita. Now Ishan healing touch cures bed-ridden Rajat. This miracle establishes him as a great saint. On the other hand, Ashtosh and Arnav had sent a private detective to Uttarkashi to check the matter. He informs that Pratapgiri made false accuse of theft on Ishan. But here Rajat’s health improves. He is saved from death. Ishan becomes a Chamatkari Baba- miraculous-saint. Ashutosh-Reema and Arnav-Shalmali are now eager to take Ishan home. People come for his Darshana, this is the climax. The last chapter presents Somgiri’s arrival from the Ashram. He persuades Ishan to comeback to the Ashram as the Ashram is in the hands of an evil. But Ishan, a real hermit is not ready to go. He persuades Somgiri to go back and keep faith in Guru. Finally, Ishan leaves for Vrindavan.
Characterization:

Ishan is the protagonist. He is the most interesting and impressive character in the novel. The whole novel is simply a presentation of his situation in this worldly world where he seems to be misfit. He is a young man of about forty. Since childhood he is very innocent and honest. He took diksha and became a sanyasi after the death of his mother. He lives in an Ashram at Uttarkashi in the Himalayas. But after fifteen year he gives up Sanyasi life and comes back to Sansari life.

Ishan lives a pious and spiritual life. He does meditation, jaap (recitation) and reads Vedas. He was given a task to translate some religious Sanskrti books. He has only aim to complete the translation work assigned by the late Guru Omkargiri. Ishan returns Mumbai after fifteen years. But now he is not a Sanyasi and he has no job and shelter. He lives in the state of Trishanku of mythology:


(Ishan was reminded of Trishanku. As Trishanku was given some place in the sky, he will also be spared some space on the earth. It will definitely be arranged by God. He will not have to find it. It will come to him itself.)

Trishanku – is a character from Sanskrit mythology. He was a king. Due to the curse he was in the state of hanging in mid air. It is also a state of neither here nor there. Ishan symbolizes it. He is neither a
sanyasi (a hermit) nor a sansari (a house holder-with worldly affairs). Dhiruben describes his condition, “Toye Ishan to Mumbaino aa chirantan melo joto joto sahej ramooj pamto chalyo jay chhe. E jane chhe ke aa ek bijij duniya chhe ane pote e duniyano vasi nathi.” (Ishan watches the permanent fair of Mumbai and delighted by it he is going ahead. He knows that this is a different world and he does not belong to it.)

Ishan is like a Yayawar bird. Yayawar is a wandering bird. It stays in a particular area for a particular season only. As the season is over; it flies to its native land. Ishan can appropriately be compared to that Yayawar bird. Ishan has great understanding. He cares for his brothers. He can realize the condition of his well-settled brothers. He is ready to leave his house if he has difficulties. Ishan is a carefree person. He has faith in God. He does not want to become a problem for his brother:

‘Ashutoshbahi!’
‘Shun chhe?’
‘manase jindagino ek pan divas- are ek pan kalak vyagratama na kadhvo joie. E pachho nathi aavto. Tamne anukool na ahoy to bolido. Hun kalej jato rahish.’

(‘Ahutoshbhai!’
‘What do you mean?’
‘Man should not pass a single day in worry….not even an hour. It never comes back. If it is inconvenient to you, please tell. I will leave tomorrow.’)

Ishan lives in two worlds. He constantly reminds the life of ashram. The author has presented two worlds here one of the so called
practical people and the other of the pious saints like Isahn, Omkargiri and Somgiri. Ishan was the most favourite disciple of his Guru Omkargiri. He constantly remembers all the preaching of his Guru. He used to say, ‘Shastar padhte ho ki toteki tarah ratte rahte ho? Samjte nahin?- ye khakka putla hain- Is par anurag nahi rakhte.......bhitar dekho. Hammesha bhitar dekho bete! Bahar mat dekhna.’ 73 (Do you read the scriptures or simply recite them like a parrot? This body is nothing else but ash only. Do not have too much affection for it. Look inside. Do not see out side; always look inside, my son.) But Pratapgiri is jealous of Ishan. He tries to make a group of his followers. Here Dhiruben exposes such so called Sanyasis who are evils in the name of Dharma.

Ishan has some miraculous power in him. This pious and spirited Ishan attracts Fransis, the servant of Arnav. Fransis visualises Father Harris in Ishan. He becomes a devotee of Ishan and loves him. Ishan is so honest and innocent that he does not like if people bow down to him or call him Baba, ‘Have hun matra Ishan chhun ne Arnavbhai? Baba kahevdaavano ke mane koina pranam svikarvano koi adhikar nathi.’ 74 (Arnavbhai, I am Ishan now. I have no right to be addressed as Saint or accept the salute of the people.’)

‘Niranjanbhai bolya, Swamiji!’
‘Na na na! Men Ashram chhodi didho chhe. Bhagva pan uteri didha chhe Have mane evu na kahevay.’ 75
(‘Niranjanbhai said, ‘Swamiji!’
Oh no! I have left the Ashram and I also have given up renunciation. Now do not address me in such a way.’)
When Rajat is improved by healing touch and prayers of Ishan Niranjanbhai considers him a miraculous saint:

‘Baba! maro dikaro bachi gayo’.
‘Ishwarni ichchha.’
‘Ishawarni nahin Baba tamari’
‘Na, mari nahin – Rajatni potani, ane Ishwarni ichchha vina to aapnathi shvas pan kya levay chhe? E to sauthi pahelo chhe.’

(‘Baba, my son has been saved.’
‘It is wish of God’
‘Baba! It is your wish not of God’
‘No, not mine; it is Rajat’s own wish. We can’t even breathe without the wish of the Almighty. He is the only saviour.’)

Ishan is a real Sanyasi. He is every moment conscious of worldly temptations. Ipsita is very beautiful young daughter of Niranjanbhai. She comes into his room off and on for various things. Ishan politely requests this beautiful devotee not to disturb him:

‘baba!’
‘hun’
‘Aa tamare mate lavi chhun’
‘pan hun Pooja karto nathi. Ane tame pan Ipsita! Vagar karne ahin avo nahin.’

(‘Baba!’
‘Yeah’
‘I have brought these things for you’

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‘But I don’t offer rituals. Ipsita! You also don’t come here without any reasons.’)

Ishan has great faith in God. When Pratapgiri makes accuse of theft Ishan is not disturbed at all. He pacifies Francis and asks him not to worry by false accuses. He says, ‘Aakhre to asatya aaropothi vichlit thava jevun hotun nathi. Kyarek ne kyank to satyano uday thay j chhe. E kshan ni rah jovani. ’ (we should not be distressed by false accuses. Finally, there is raise of truth somewhere. Just wait for that moment.)

Ishan is completely conscious of his aim of life. That is Moksha-salvation. He comes back in worldly life but he is constantly thinking about the ultimate aim of his life:

Sansarma aavya pachhi aava badha pratibandho chalshe nahin. Jatjatna sanjogo aavshe, jat jatna manaso malshe. E badhani vachche rahine pan aatmachintanma magna rahevanu chhe. Pote shun e kari shakshe? Kyarek lapsi javay to? (Such practices will not be possible in this practical world. Various types of circumstances will be created and there will be meetings with various types of people. Among all these, I have to contemplate on self. Shall I be able to do it? What will happen if tempted somewhere?)

Ashutosh is elder brother of Ishan. He has a son and a daughter. He has love for his brother but he is under control of his wife. He plans take a small flat for Ishan. He wants to settle him. But due to his quarrelsome wife he has to send Ishan to Arnav’s home. He also proves selfish in the
end. Reema is a typical selfish wife. She is not ready to keep Ishan in her house. But when Ishan becomes a miraculous saint this selfish woman is ready to accept him. Arnav also is an elder brother of Ishan. He is the most materialistic and cunning man. He is so called practical man. Shalmali, Arnav’s wife is a very hypocrite. She is very selfish. She is very much of fond of show and pomp. She is interested in materialistic things.

Ipsita is the only good lady character in the novel. She is daughter of Niranjanbhai, a richman. She is young and beautiful with the qualities of brain and beauty. Though she is very rich she is simple. She has a lot of devotion and respect for Ishan. She belongs to the good characters of the novel. Somgiri is one of the good characters. He is eager to take Ishan to the Ashram. He is a pious sanyasi. Niranjanbhai is typical rich father of an ill son. He has respect and love for Ishan. Fransis is minor but very impressive character. He has deep respect for Ishan.

**Vision of the Author:**

Human life is the greatest gift of God. Happiness in life is the sole aim of all human beings. Dhiruben seems to convey a wonderful message here. She has written this dialogue for Ishan, ‘*manase jindagino ek pan disas- are ek pan kalak vyagratama na kadhvo joie. E pachho nathi aavto.*’ 80 (Man should not pass a single day in worry….not even an hour. It never comes back.)

When Pratapgiri makes accuse of theft, Ishan is not disturbed at all. His response is very positive and optimistic. The pious, hermit says, ‘*Aakhre to asatya aaropothe vichlit thava jevun hotun nathi. Kyarek ne*
kyank to satyano uday thay j chhe. E kshanni rah jovani. ³¹ (we should not be distressed by false accuses. Finally there is raise of truth somewhere. Just wait for that moment.)

**Language:**

Third person narrative technique is used here by Dhiruben. The author is omnipresent. The narration is very dramatic. We visualize the events before our eyes. Ishan off and on broods over his past life at the Ashram of uttarkashi. The preaching of Omkargiri is reflected through the mind of Ishan. Ishan’s character is exposed through his thoughts and sentiments. Flashback technique is used to present the past life of Ishan.

The incidents of the novel take place in the city of Mumbai. The novel starts with Ishan’s arrival in Mumbai and it ends with his departure for Vrindavan from Mumbai. Both times, the location is railway station. Dhiruben describes the novel as ‘a misfit man’s stay for some days in this world’. She writes in the prologue of this novel, “Roshnithi Zalhalta khandman jameli mahefilman baharna andhkarmathi udine aavelun ek pakshi ek bariethi praveshi biji bariethi nikali jay etlasamayni aa vat.” (A bird coming from the darkness of the outside enters a room full of light and festivity; it enters from a window and exits from another window. This is the only span of the story.)

As usual, Dhiruben describes the traffic and life of Mumbai. The polluted environment of Mumbai is described superbly:
pagalpane dodva mandta aa vahnoni kai khot nathi. Aa vishal rajmarg par kyarek dhumado dekhay chhe, Kyarek nathi dekhato, pan shvas ma vartay chhe. Kashik durgandh, je aaste aaste vatavarnno ek bhag bani gai chhe.  

(There are a plenty of vehicles running madly on the road. Smoke is sometimes seen on this big highway. Sometimes it is not seen but ifelt in breathings. It is a bad odor that has gradually become a part of the environment.)

As the buildings and locations have special significance in the novels of Dhiruben. Here the places are the Ashram of Uttarkashi. It mentioned only in flash back to present the past life of Ishan. The eleventh floor-flat of the building ‘The Nest’ and the fifth floor flat of the ‘Padmarag’ building play a crucial role in the novel. They are the shelters of Ishan. Use of appropriate proverbial phrase is another characteristic of Dhiruben’s style. She has used some very well used proverbs, *dubato manas tarnu jhale* (a drowning man catches a straw), *shakat no bhar jyam shvan tane* (one thinks that one is the most significant and inevitable person) and *sadhu to chaal tapa bhala* (a saint is never static on a place.)

Dhiruben has cited some allusions from Mythology. To present the situation of Ishan she has mentioned the character of Trishanku. Some other examples are of Abhimanyu and Vishwamitra. She compares the temptation of the world with the death of Abhimanyu in *Mahabharta*, “‘Kyo Viswamitra aavine aa Trishanku mate srushti rachna karshe?’”  

(Who will become a Vishwamitra to create a world for this Trishanku?)
Viswamitra is a mythological character from the *Ramayana*. He was a great saint. The Character of Trisahnnku is chosen to illustrate the exact condition of Ishan. It is a perfect example of Isahn’s condition. As Ishan is aware of the temptations of the Moha-Maya in the world, She writes:

*Sauthi pahela Milan, pachhi parichay, pachhi atmiyata, pachhi aasakti.. Abhimanyuni jem pravesh to aasan chhe aa badha kothaoman, pan bahar nikalvani vidya na hoy to chhelle shadripuone hathe marvanun; e pan nakki.*

(First of all, there is meeting, then acquaintance followed by intimacy and finally attachment. An entry is easy in all these gateways like Abhimanyu. But if one has no skilled art of exit then death is certain by the six enemies.)

Each chapter ends raising a sense of curiosity in the mind of the reader. Reader thinks what will happen now? Really *Aagantuk* is one of the finest novels ever written in Gujarati. The *central academy award* to this novel is timely appreciation of Dhiruben’s art.
Notes and References:

2. Ibid., p.66.
3. Ibid., p.68.
4. Ibid., p.104.
5. Ibid., p.104.
6. Ibid., p.80.
7. Ibid., p.01.
8. Ibid., p.02.
9. Ibid., p.07.
10. Ibid., p.02.
11. Ibid., p.80.
12. Ibid., p.80.
15. Ibid., p.100.
16. Ibid., p.100.
17. Ibid., p.155.
18. Ibid., p.18.
19. Ibid., p.62.
20. Ibid., p.98.
21. Ibid., p.68.
22. Ibid., p.37.
23. Ibid., p.57.
24. Ibid., p.144.
25. Ibid., p.100.
26. Ibid., p. 04.
27. Ibid., p.102.
28. Ibid., p.29.
29. Ibid., p.36.
30. Ibid., p.37.
31. Ibid., p.135.
33. Ibid., p. 131.
34. Ibid., p. 01.
35. Ibid., p.62.
36. Ibid., p. 11.
37. Ibid., p.12.
38. Ibid., p.20.
39. Ibid., p.17.
40. Ibid., p.21.
41. Ibid., p.121.
42. Ibid., p.41.
43. Ibid., p.02.
44. Ibid., p.36.
45. Ibid., p.13.
46. Ibid., p.03.
47. Ibid., p.39.
48. Ibid., p.46.
49. Ibid., p.71.
50. Ibid., p.134.
51. Ibid., p.22.
52. Ibid., p.81.
53. Ibid., p.09.
54. Ibid., p.15.
55. Ibid., p.43.
56. Ibid., p.13.
57. Ibid., p.05.
58. Ibid., p.64.
59. Ibid., p.73.
60. Ibid., p.81.
61. Ibid., p.131.
62. Ibid., p.96.
63. Ibid., p.107.
65. Ibid., p.17.
66. Ibid., p.138.
67. Ibid., p.139.
68. Ibid., p.108.
69. Ibid., p.120.
70. Ibid., p.25.
71. Ibid., p.124.
72. Ibid., p.23.
73. Ibid., p.46.
74. Ibid., p.82.
75. Ibid., p.87.
76. Ibid., p.104.
77. Ibid., p.112.
78. Ibid., p.103.
79. Ibid., p.87.
80. Ibid., p.23.
81. Ibid., p.103.
82. Ibid., p.122.
83. Ibid., p.27.
84. Ibid., p.130.