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**The Aspects of Indian Feminism and Problems in Translating A Study of Kundanika
Kapadiya's 'Seven Steps in the Sky'**

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**Abstract**

The current essay aims to examine how feminist concepts are portrayed in Kundanika Kapadiya's acclaimed book, "*Seven Steps in the Sky*." A feminist author from Gujarat, Kundanika Kapadiya. She discusses the issues that women confront and their position in society and advocates for the equality of women's rights. The fearless realist she is. *Saat Pagla Aakash Ma*, the book's Gujarati original title, was written by Kundanika Kapadiya. Later, the translation was made into English. For the current work, the researcher has considered the English translation. This essay aims to draw attention to the difficulties in translating the novel's feminist elements.

Key Words: Feminism, Feminine, Feminist, Indian Feminism, Translation,

Introduction:

The colonial era in India was a formative stage for feminism. Even before this movement, India was not known for the concept of women's servitude. Although Indian women had previously expressed their feminism and yearning for independence, feminism as a movement is a recent phenomenon that belongs in the contemporary setting. Equal rights for women are the foundation of feminism. The British concept of educating women for national development originated in the 19th century and impacted Indian feminism. Therefore, two forces are working against feminism in India today: one on a cultural level and the other on a political level.

Feminism in Gujarati Literature:

The release of Kundanika Kapadia's Sahitya Akademi-winning book "*Seven Steps in the Sky*" opens up new literary possibilities for Modern Gujarati. The sentence introduces the book. "All are unequal in the world, but women are more." (Kapadia 1)

Through the character of Vasudha, the novel, for the first time in Gujarati literature, explores topics like woman's search for identity, woman's place in Indian family structures, and woman's entitlement to their body. The book provides a chronicle of women's struggles. It paints an image of Indian society, where women are less valuable. The "owner" of Vasudha's intellect, body, and heart is Vymosh. Vasudha decides to end the relationship because she objects to the idea of "ownership." The story is, therefore, about a woman's freedom from a society where males are in charge. Because this book has impacted so many other



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writers, it helped pave the way for feminism-related literature.

To mention a few, Dhiruben Patel, Varsha Adalja, Ila Arab Mehta, Saroj Pathak, and Bindu Bhatt are some of the other female authors of Gujarati literature. In her book *Akhepatar*, Bindu Bhatt explores the lesbian connection between Vridra and Mira. In her writings *Andhari Gali Ma Safed Tapka*, *Grabh Gatha*, and *Mira Yagnik Ni Diary*, *Himanshi Shelat* also addresses women's pressing concerns. In *Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoi* and *Sag Ne Sankoro*, Varsha Adalja depicts educated women of the middle class who are conflicted about society and themselves.

What type of future society can we anticipate is one of the concerns that contemporary Gujarati women's writing poses concerning the interaction between men and women in Indian culture. Is it serene and harmonious, or is it conflict-filled? Why not redefine the man-woman connection at this point? Is it not time to think of women as human beings? Shashi Deshpande's insight regarding feminism addresses our queries. She claims:

I am a feminist because I think we need to have a world that we should recognize as a place for all of us human beings. There is no superior and inferior; we are two halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone de Beauvoir that the fact that we are human is much more important than our being men or women" (Deshpande 210)

Shashi Deshpande concentrates on equality as a result. She asserts the equality of all people.

Feministic Aspects in Kundanika Kapadiya's 'Seven Steps in the Sky':

Vasudha is the story's main character. Vasudha poses a question at the start of the book to illustrate the gender inequality still pervasive in society. She claims, "Can one live the way one wants to, especially if one is a woman?" (1). This book's female characters all share feminist attitudes. They are adamant that they have the right to live their lives whatever they choose. They are optimistic. Vasudha's question was addressed by Ana, who said that for a woman to live the life she chooses, the fabric of society must be torn. Alopa concurs that if she can endure the reactions of society and perhaps even those of her people, she should have the guts to withstand civilization. Vasudha leads a regular Indian housewife's life. As a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law, she excels. However, she too departs from her house at the age of 52 to satisfy her ambitions. She consequently does not give up her ambitions for the sake of others. She becomes aware of her value.



Vasudha is standing on her patio the night before her wedding. She reflects on her desire to have a free life. She notices a big white bird making a graceful flight. She believes that life ought to be stress-free like that bird. Later that night, she believed the bird was conveying a message. Her youthful mind has been sown with the idea that she, too, would live like that bird one day. She commits to herself that although she may get married, build a home, and start a family the next day, there will come a day when she will live according to her desires. So, this seed will take fifty-two years to fully mature into a tree. Thus, one day, as she informs Ana at Anandgram,

I thought I didn't want to live like this. I don't want to die fulfilling others' expectations. I want to live a life that satisfies me. I want to live true to myself, to my thoughts and feelings. I don't want to be an ideal wife; I want to be a real woman. (3)

Vasudha was in love with Aaditya before they married because he shared her open-mindedness. He mentions the Himalayas, which stand for freedom and space. Vasudha disagrees with the skewed social perception that a daughter should only aim to win her husband's and his family's hearts throughout their talk. She challenges the custom that requires a woman to alter her identity, last name, way of life, and even her faith after marriage. She finds it offensive that a woman cannot go to a balcony or terrace for no other reason than to breathe fresh air or spend time alone. She has always favored independence. She wants to spend the money on whatever she pleases. She enjoys spending time in nature. She enjoys reading novels as well.

Vasudha marries Vyomesh, who has a different outlook on life than Vasudha. She does not have time for herself or to pursue her interests after marrying him. Because he cares about her body, even she cannot feel linked to her spouse. She enjoys reading and flowers but does not desire materialistic items like jewelry, clothing, etc. She wants her spouse to be sympathetic to her needs and lead a lifestyle similar to hers. She also notices that the other family members consistently focus on Vyomesh's needs while largely avoiding her. Her inquisitive nature prompts her to pose a crucial query such as, "Why do women get married? Why did she marry? What do the women get out of marriage?" (22)

She critiques society and its ideas by posing such queries. In the very end, it's usually the girls that suffer. She is compelled to be married without fully comprehending her aspirations as their education ends. She thus loses focus and experiences despair. She is forced to give up her life. Vasudha believes being married entails living on borrowed time. She dislikes such monotonous relationships. Vasudha did not choose to become pregnant. Her spouse decided to do it. She claims,



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This seed is from a man. I am providing it a facility to grow, yet he has no physical responsibility for bearing this child. Whatever happens, is my body, yet nobody gave me a choice if and when I wanted to be in this condition. Not that I don't like children, but no one accepts that I can have a sway in the matter. (28)

When the family, especially her husband, does not support her, she considers terminating the pregnancy. Any woman's response would undoubtedly shock the readers, but one must also consider the frustration she must experience. Faiba is expecting a son. Vasudha is also irritated by her fondness for boys. She finds it difficult to comprehend why society is much tougher on infertile women and does not view them favorably if they cannot produce a male heir. Vasudha, on the other hand, thinks that boys and girls are equal. She becomes irritated by the gender inequality that prevents a girl, a daughter, from staying with her parents to care for them. She becomes quite upset when she cannot care for her sick mother. It becomes difficult for her to accept.

Vasudha finds it difficult to comprehend that they would always have their father's name solely after carrying, giving birth to, and raising her three kids. The mother won't be mentioned when the family tree is created. Her body and mind were exhausted from the never-ending tasks of raising kids, yet she passed away without leaving a name or any other mark.

Vasudha is highly concerned with the identity and self-worth of women. She is disturbed by damage to them in any environment. She is upset by Ranjana's husband's extramarital activities, Ranjana's treatment unfairly, or Lolita's husband Sudhir's beating of Lolita due to his suspicious attitude. She is further troubled by Asha's death at an early age as a result of gender prejudice. All the gender-segregating societal norms annoy and trouble her. She wonders if women who have given their entire lives to sacrifice only deserve to experience sorrow, loneliness, and helplessness.

At 50, she understands that the moment is right because her children have grown up and all her obligations have been fulfilled. She believes that she should begin her new life the very next day. Instead, she says that she "retires" the very following day. Here, the word "retirement" demonstrates that she is "a new woman" who disengages from her conventional function. She has called the huge step she wants to take in this case—retirement—and it is a very significant choice for her. After leaving her home, she concludes that life is something to be made rather than haphazardly lived.



Vasudha develops her fully own thoughts at "Anandgram." She starts assisting Mitra with her duties there. She also observes the activity in the bakery and quickly picks up the fundamentals. Vasudha assumes full control of the bakery at Anandgram after Agnivesh transfers to another university to establish a bakery for them. Vasudha also begins to make some money. In addition to her new job, Vasudha is now dressed in a salwar kameez, which gives her the freedom to move rapidly and comfortably. She has a new existence. She believes that shortly, she will be able to travel to the mountains. A changed Vasudha states that women should come together and recognize that all women in need are our sisters and that it is our responsibility to support them. Vasudha's opinions appeared to be forceful and unwavering. Aditya shares the same conviction about her power as Isha, Swarup, and other friends. She represents the earth to him, as her name implies. She is a creative force equal to that of the earth. Finally, this new Vasudha accepts Aditya's suggestion to travel to the Himalayas to improve the local women's lives.

Conclusion:

A book on feminism is called *Seven Steps in the Sky*. It tells the journey of a lady. The author of the book, Kundanika Kapadia, wants to convey that women must stop thinking of themselves as victims and instead concentrate on becoming subjects. The Gujarati book by Kundanika Kapadiya that served as the inspiration for this study was translated into English. The researcher has struggled to interpret common feminist elements, sentiments, and attitudes. These usual feministic characteristics are ingrained in society, making it extremely challenging to interpret them. In addition, the cultures of the two languages are dissimilar. Some conversations are quite emotional, and it can be challenging to translate sentiments that come from the heart rather than the head. It has been noted that translation has its limitations as a result. In some languages and cultures, certain words and phrases lose their original meaning when translated into the language of origin.



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