CONCLUSIONS

Truth, Beauty, Poetry – she is All: once more all under the form of other.
All except herself.

--- Simone de Beauvoir

India has always been a land of deep-rooted value system. Exhibiting the trends of true Indians, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao affirm the values of life and display supreme faith in moral order in their novels. Anand admits boldly: "I was doing no more than what a writer does when he seeks to interpret the truth from the realities of his life." Narayan states in My Days: "I wish to attack the tyranny of love and see if life could offer other values than the man-woman relationship to a writer." Raja Rao also admits forthrightly: "I am interested in discussing the problems of the truth-seeker. I publish what I enjoy, I believe one should seek truth, whatever it is, and pay the price for it."

At the time Anand, Narayan and Rao started writing, the winds of change had started blowing over the societal set-up of India. Women had been struggling for their liberation all around the world. Indian reformers believed that this struggle for liberation would make women give up their values, ethos, and even their unique sense of self for the sake of success. Therefore, womanhood became one of the most important signifiers of social transformation and, reformers in India launched an indigenous attempt to build a new image of woman. A refined image of pure Indian womanhood culturally loaded
against the stereotypical notion of a modern Westernized woman was promoted. In the whole process, they again recreated women as a symbol of cultural purity.

The writers of the time also came forward in developing and creating a perfect image of the Indian woman. Anand, Narayan and Rao in different ways feel the pressure of the prevalent ideologies and put forward different perspectives of what it is to be an Indian woman through their novels. In the whole process, they project Indian womanhood with all its complexities, often betraying contradictions built into their positions.

The motivating force in Anand's novels is social realism and a passionate progressivism that had swept the world at the time. He is a humanist to the core and feels strongly about suffering of the down trodden, but for him, women remain more or less passive subjects of reform. He himself accepts: "The question of caste and class and women ......seem to be raw material that can easily lend to propaganda tracts." The views of Anand appears to be neutral, but they are in fact sex-blind; he fails to recognize that women are subject to special form of oppression within capitalist societies and does not analyze gender differences and gender ideologies. For him, masculine consciousness has almost become synonymous with human consciousness. His interests indeed are located in human nature but his women are subsumed under the category 'man'. His women seek their redemption in a society defined and redefined by men. This is their predicament which Anand's 'humanism' seems to have accepted as 'natural'.

Narayan embraces new orbits of definition of womanhood along with conventional image of womanhood for his female characters. He suggests a balance between the traditional respect for the family and the Western idea of self-identity and
expression. He believes that it would be impossible to find a prescription for correct behaviour for men and women but it is very much possible to find a framework which allows them to come to terms with diversity for creative relationships.

In spite of being an expatriate, Raja Rao refuses to side with any Western thoughts against the pure Indian ones in the depiction of his female characters. He does not believe in free exchange of ideas between India and the West and praises his own culture the way it is and gives mythical dimensions to the presentation of his characters. Rao is not consistent in his general attitude towards women. He gives most of his female characters very positive and sparkling personalities of their own. Yet, in deference to the Vedic views, he is reluctant to let them function on their own as individuals. He feels that bondage is woman’s destiny and to be a woman is to bear the yoke of a man.

Almost all the women in Anand, Narayan and Rao’s early novels exist within traditional Indian domestic settings. Having defined themselves entirely through their husbands and fathers these women are incapable of self-reflection. They actively accept their fathers’ and husbands’ values, life-style and ideas, without taking into consideration their own. Much of the cheers of their life are dependent on men. They live in mental and psychological exile and spend their entire life waiting for nothing. The lives of these women are full of trivialities and pettiness. Anand’s female characters like Sohini, Leila, Parvati, Lakshmi and Sajani epitomize the ideal Indian womanhood – simple, sincere and suffering. Narayan’s women - Swami’s mother, Swami’s Granny, Malathi, Susila, Savitri, Janamma, Sampath’s wife, Srinivasa’s wife, Brinda and Meenakshi are ‘Angels’ in the house. They are typical devoted housewives, who are very particular about performing their domestic duties that are repetitive, boring, tiring and above all unpaid,
and bring no recognition, neither social nor personal. For them, serving their husbands and housekeeping are the ultimate objectives of life.

Although Narayan’s character Savitri in the novel *The Dark Room* walks on the lines of an ideal Indian woman and loses her husband to a woman who is not morally upright, she has, since beginning, a realistic approach to life. In the hope of getting a respectable life she leaves home but soon realizes that she has to live on the mercy of others because she does not have proper education. Therefore, she returns home and her quick retreat is considered as a punishment for the adventurous woman. Although apparently Savitri looks foolish and humiliated coming back to Ramani’s house, she is transformed into a practical and clear-headed woman who now knows her position and her destination well. Her love for Ramani is lost somewhere in her three days of excursion where she meets Life. Ramani tries hard not to be a loser but he actually is one. He leaves her to face the miseries of life but this becomes a blessing in disguise for her. She stops worrying unnecessarily for her husband and starts working for her daughters Sumati and Kamala’s future. She locates herself in the struggle for social transformation. She refuses to allow her daughters’ lives to be corroded by ideologically constructed constraints. Savitri does not assert herself militantly or vigorously at the end of the novel but she kindles the spark of life with dignity and tries to obtain status not for herself but for her daughters. By creating Savitri, Narayan advances his theme of women’s liberation to a decisive solution in his own distinct manner.

In *The English Teacher* Narayan depicts the emergence of genuinely affectionate and companionate relationship where neither the husband nor the wife need be self-conscious about their position. Susila is neither the goddess nor the temptress - she is a
man's mate and companion, Krishna's sexual partner and sharer of his joy and grief. They respect each other's independent identity and point of view. In between the polarities of the couple, we have a very touching, pure and pristine love between two young people. Krishna and Susila's relationship progresses from the romantic and the sensual to the sublime and the spiritual. Krishna is the man who stands on the fringes of society, challenging and undermining its patriarchal values. He is the mouthpiece of Narayan who provides an alternative world-view where men and women can co-exist as equals. Narayan emphasizes through his male characters like Krishna and Srinivasa from *Mr Sampath* that husbands too have duties towards their wives, which in actual life they forget them with impunity.

In spite of having a positive approach towards women and talking unstoppably about their rights, Narayan could not come out of the thought that conveys that it is always good for a woman to live within the boundaries of patriarchal framework. If she tries to upturn the social norms she would herself disintegrate and that is the only stark reality of life of a woman. Shanta Bai, a character in the novel *The Dark Room* is a master of her own will who combines her feminine independence with a shrewd opportunism that characteristically belongs to the new civilization. But she forgets that she lives in a society where it has reserved epithets for her - slut, slattern, harlot, keep, prostitute, whore, concubine, hooker and so on while there is hardly a single such word for men who enjoy sexual freedom. In order to lead a free life she loses social prestige which every single human being craves for. She rejects the social norms but at the same time accepts it as a way of life which is reflected in her restlessness. She seeks permanent peace that is lost in the course of becoming an emancipated woman. She suffers from
hysteria which is regarded as a price to be paid by the women who want to be emancipated.

Discarding the austere life of a widow and leaving her son to strangers, Shanti in Narayan's *Mr. Sampath* ventures out in the glamorous world of cinema. But soon she realizes that her beauty will bring no good to her except ruffians. She goes back to her son to lead a normal life by giving up her intense desire to be an actress. Shanti and Shantha Bai are very active women and enjoy sexual freedom. They seem to be free from the traditional shackles of society but these women are nothing but mere victims - victims who want to fly off but return to their roots humiliated and frustrated because there is no escape for a woman from this worldly trap. Their punishments seem justified on moral grounds without rousing any sort of pity and sympathy towards them.

Similarly, Anand's Gujri and Bibi Uttam Kaur from the novel *Coolie* are also projected as figures of evil because of their screaming, shouting and abusing people around them. But in reality, they are strictly subject to men in their disposition of life and talent. They are the most insecure women in society because they are vaguely aware of the false power they are equipped with. They use abusive language as a means to assert their place at home and in the family. They seem to be mad and termagant but they are the real victims of patriarchal society.

Theoretically, women of *Kanthapura* hold great importance by having active share in the fight for the independence of their country, shedding their age-old bars of custom and orthodoxy but practically, these women do not really hold the centre stage and cannot bring out a change in their traditionally established roles. They are, no doubt, women who step out of the four walls for a bigger cause at the call of Gandhi but their
mental as well as social status remains the same. They are still dependent, financially and psychologically, and seek help and protection from men. It is also inconceivable that a woman who has hardly a say in the household matters can be a leader outside, a woman who is a weakling inside can be a bundle of power outside and give new life and vitality to everything without possessing it.

Rao is ambivalent from the very beginning as to how to treat Ratna in the novel *Kanthapura*, who has many so-called masculine traits which account for the complexity of her character. Although she is a good girl she is considered a blot on the society. Rao finds out ways to avoid contradictions of whether Ratna is a Western model or a genuinely gentle girl. He rules out all the possibilities by depicting Ratna as an adolescent girl who is only fifteen years old and a girl of this age is considered an immature who does not know the realities of life and lives in the world of her blooming youth where everything seems rosy. Rao annihilates Ratna's self-assertive act as nothing but merely the childish act of a growing girl. Nevertheless, he punishes her by throwing her out of the village so that no girl in future dares to copy her.

To be a female is to be confined to one's home, to sameness, to tradition and if she lifts her head she is reminded repeatedly of her secondary position and punished for transgression - that is the truth about the women of Anand, Narayan and Rao in their early novels, which tie women to the relative powerlessness of their lot and also prevent them from having a true knowledge of their situation. These women experience the weight of the ideologies of the past which naturalize the arbitrary power division between the sexes.
The British presence was always perceived as a threat to Indian culture. Many Indians feared the disappearance of 'India' from the face of the earth by being merged with the more powerful imperial presence, which had infiltrated all spheres of socio-cultural ambience. Anand, Narayan and Rao being very much aware of this problem, reflect the agony of the Indian society through their Indian as well as Western female characters in their novels.

Anand despises Western people and their life-style which is evident in his early novels Untouchable, Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud. In contrast to the sober and loving Indian woman Sohini, Anand presents a Western character Mary Hutchinson in the novel Untouchable. Mrs Hutchinson creates terror for her husband and people around her while Indian character Sohini gives solace and comfort to everyone she meets. In the novel Two Leaves and a Bud in contrast to an Indian woman Sajani, Anand presents a Western woman Margaret or Mrs Charles Croft-Cooke. Although her position in the family is same as that of Sajani, she feels superior by criticizing servants and coolies. The character of Barbara is presented in contrast to Leila and the coolie women. Barbara has been a virgin and she has given herself to Havre without the least self-consciousness and leaves him unashamedly in his crisis blaming him for his zeal for social work, which she once used to admire and feel proud of. Anand posits that the coolie women are compelled to involve in physical relationships due to harsh economic conditions while Barbara commits adultery just to satisfy her fancy and snaps the relationship when there is no hope to get comfort and luxury from the man. There is a deep chasm between the character of Leila and Barbara. Leila tries to save her honour at the expense of her life, whereas Barbara offers it to get material happiness.
Another contrast is seen in the novel *Coolie* where Anand portrays the promiscuous character of Mrs Mainwaring as against morally upright Indian women - Bibiji, Gujri, Parvati and Lakshmi. Anand exposes layer-by-layer the sham and hypocrisy of Mrs Mainwaring. He seems to convey that if there is goodness in her character it is only due to her Indian origin. She is a woman for whom a man is just an object to be explored the same way as for an Indian man a woman is a territory to be explored. Munoo feels an irresistible urge for women whether it is Sheila or Parbati or Lakshmi but it is Mrs Mainwaring who is after men. She is involved in relationships with Captain Aga Raza Ali Shah, Guy Mainwaring, Mr Merchant and many courtiers and officials. She also yearns to have Munoo in her arms. In spite of all her amour-propre Mrs Mainwaring is reduced to an object of desire. Anand sarcastically posits that being a public property is all what it is meant to be a ‘free’ and ‘emancipated’ woman. This way, Anand establishes Indian women’s superiority over Western women because even villainous characters like Gujri and Bibiji are much better than Mrs Mainwaring.

Narayan has fears that Westernization of Indian culture would bring a curse on the society and therefore, suggests that women should refrain from aping the Western culture. He is not very firm in opposing it like Anand but he finds it threatening which is reflected when his character Ramani says, “they mustn’t attempt to ape the Western women, all of whom, according to Ramani’s belief, lived in a chaos of promiscuity and divorce”(p.141). In the novel *The Serpent and the Rope* Rao is also apprehensive about the impact of European culture on Indian society. Like Narayan and Rao, Anand also thinks that to talk constantly about rights and divorce is all that Western paradigms of women’s freedom professed.
In their later novels Anand, Narayan and Rao, despite their exposure to the Western feminist ideas propagated by the radical feminist movements in 60s and 70s, stick more or less to the established norms of the society. Each one of them tries to be judicious towards men and women but fails to transcend the forces of history which have allowed them to look at woman with stereotypical vision.

Regarding novels like *The Road* and *The Old Woman and the Cow* which are revolutionary in thought and content, Anand revisits and reiterates the same old paradigms for living in Indian society although he confesses: "I am ...doing some village social welfare work in order to integrate my love for the poor with actual work for them... *The Old Woman and the Cow* and *The Road* will confirm the poetic truth that the alleviation of pain and its expiation are the only values given to our intelligentsia in the present time." His female characters Rukmani and Mala in the novel *The Road* prove that women’s chief occupation is only to love and being loved whereas the heroes are emotionally divided between the world of love and the world of business and public affairs. Rukmani and Mala deck themselves up so that their beauty could charm their suitors. Their attitude is controlled by fantasy. They let their thoughts go scot-free, craving for husbands and spoil their careers and life fantasizing not about their future but their future husbands. The life of repression in the family affects the very source of their thinking and behaviour. In order to achieve their freedom they seek marriage as an alternative to the bondage with the hope that their new role will help them in acquiring some happiness in life. The conflict between the real and the fantastic makes the life of these characters all the more miserable.
Whereas Bhikhu in *The Road* makes frantic effort to seek, organize and affirm his identity by ridiculing the age-old tradition of untouchability and Maqbool in *Death of a Hero* dies a death of a martyr in order to establish his own identity, female characters are mere onlookers of the history surrounding them. They might have different ideology - the ideology that too is based on the perceptions of their husbands or brothers but at the end of the day they are nothing but spectators waiting for things to be done either by Almighty or by men.

Anand's character of Gauri in *The Old Woman and the Cow* is much on the pattern of Henrick Ibsen's Nora in the play *The Doll's House* but with a difference. In *The Doll's House* Nora walks out of her husband's house to an indefinite destination whereas Gauri leaves her husband's house to go to a definite destination where another man is waiting for her and is ready to accept her though it is depicted in a very subtle manner. She is able to desert her husband only because she has the support of Dr Mahindra. Without this alternative she might have decided to stay back with her husband regardless of the degree of humiliation inflicted on her. Thus, her act of leaving the house cannot be considered bold and radical. She just shifts her god from one man to another. It is also worth noting that Gauri dared to take such a bold step because she is from a family where her father is dead and her mother is a liberal who ridicules this idea of one husband and one life. Therefore, she has no one to give account for her act. Gauri disappears from the village for another destination maintaining the myth that if women fail to prove their chastity they have to move out of the place willingly or unwillingly.

The matrix out of which Narayan constructs Indian female identity largely stems from the glorious ancient cultural past. He is also definitely conscious of the presence of
taken into account microscopically, they are paranoid and irrational. Their behaviour actually demonstrates a powerfully subversive response to male invasion. The resistance they put up is a conscious attempt to retain their autonomy and sense of self. They have not gained independence from men, but rather continue to react to them. They try to get away from patriarchy using the patriarchal rules themselves. In the role of Rosie and Daisy, Narayan transforms the suppressed woman into a dominating and tyrannical possessor and an active victimizer of innocent men. Narayan clothes Rosie and Daisy in ill fitting masculine traits which conceal their feminine self but the result is something unnatural, unconvincing, peculiar and even monstrous. They turn out to be terrible sorceress goddesses. The patriarchal persona ultimately leads them to demonization and the reader witnesses Rosie and Daisy’s inexorable progress towards self-destruction.

These novels raise important issues of gender and power. Narayan inverts subject and object repudiating a woman’s passive and yielding role. Male power, represented by Raju and Raman, is challenged, and men are momentarily displaced from the center of the universe and forced to defer to a woman’s command of the situation. But finally, Narayan brings relief to the heroes and makes them free from the clutches of the heroines.

The feminist movement of 60s and 70s had almost no impact on Rao’s imagination despite the fact that he lived in Paris, the gravitational centre of feminism. Living thousands of miles away from India, Rao takes us to the vital centre of the authentic Indian experience. But he offers us only romanticized and rose-coloured vision. He refuses to negotiate the existential reality of women and gives his consent to everything that is sanctioned by scriptures.
Being an educated woman and married to an educated husband, Madeline's condition in the novel *The Serpent and the Rope* is no better than a housewife. Like any other Indian woman she is madly in love with her husband Rama and is very much anxious to inspire love but Rama never allows her to enter his inner realm. Before entering the space of Rama, Madeline has to renounce any thought of being superior or peer to Rama. She has to submit herself completely before Rama, which she refuses at times and thus an estranged relationship arises between them. Rama is not prepared for the intellectual give and take. He expects others to accept his philosophy blindly, without any slightest doubt. The attitude of Rama reveals the pseudo-liberation of middle-class educated Indian male who is reluctant to give up the position of power. He cannot accept the role reversal where woman would be his equal.

Madeline's problem is more psychological than external, which has resulted from unfulfilled desires and failure in love. She realizes the superficiality of her existence and takes the first opportunity to get away to sort things out. She chooses to wither away, rather than live a deadly existence. She decides to fill even less space than a society has grudgingly allotted her. There is no conflict between her and her husband but there is a desire to be loved and, after being a failure in love there is withdrawal of her own self from an unwanted sphere. Her relationship with Rama brings frustration, confusion, disintegration, disillusionment and meaninglessness in her life. The alienation from her husband drives her to the fits of depression and forces her to renounce the world itself. She presents the picture of a distraught woman who finds solace in Buddhist religion and ends up as a Sadhvi.
In the same novel Savithri's power is derived from and is in the service of her man whether it is Rama or Pratap. She is a goddess as well as a slave and possesses a paradoxical existence shifting from one role to another easily as and when it is required. Her freedom is restricted to the superficial aspects such as in the matters of dressing, eating, smoking, fixing a date and so on. Savithri is the finest embodiment of Indian tradition despite the veneer of Western life. Savithri accepts obediently what Rama says so there is complete unification of the two - the body and the mind. Her status is a metaphor for woman's ambiguous position within the dominant male culture of India. Savithri, despite being an educated woman who is capable of understanding the idea of rights and interests, acts in ways that sacrifices her own interests because she understands too well that to be a woman is to bear a yoke of man and the sooner she accepts this stark reality of life the better her life would be.

Saroja in *The Serpent and the Rope* is ever eager to escape from her unhappy surroundings and an equally unhappy marriage but she cannot because she knows that those who dare to fly off fall within their own trap. Saroja finds herself fettered by social constraints. She is expected to be a devoted wife because failure to be so means making her feel guilty for her transgressions. Saroja is condemned to a life of hardship and loneliness just because she has to save her so-called family honour. Finally, Rao finds a solution for Saroja's miseries and allots a safe place to her by marrying her to a well-off boy. No matter if she is not happy - she is safe.

Saroja in the novel *The Cat and Shakespeare* feels cheated when she learns of her husband's infidelity but is determined not to follow age-old strategy of making herself more attractive and desirable to win her husband back. She respects herself and makes
sure that she is not taken for granted and refuses to entertain Pai. She affirms her dignity and her ancestral property proves to be an important force in her evolution as an assertive self.

By making his character Shantha from *The Cat and Shakespeare* mysterious, Rao legitimizes Pai's illicit relationship with her. Pai surrenders not before a simple woman but a woman who has magical power in her. While the truth is that she is a victim of society. For Saroja's assertive attitude, Rao brands her as a negligent and bad wife whereas in spite of being a concubine, Shantha's obedience towards Pai makes her desirable. Here we have a powerful legitimisation of the ideologies that give manhood a hegemonic position. Rao's subscription to the patriarchal concept that woman acquires her identity only in terms of her relationship with man becomes apparent in all his novels.

Filial sentimentality is an Indian convention. Therefore, a range of sympathetic mothers is found in Anand, Narayan and Rao's novels. The symbolic idealization of woman as a mother is strongly emphasized by them. In almost all the novels we have an image of a mother.

The image of the "loving mother" is so powerful that women are unable to deconstruct that image. Mothers are forced into an intense awareness of the reality of having a child. In Madeline the ideal of motherhood is invoked repeatedly till she succumbs to it. The shock of Savithri's brother's departure makes her mother a docile and a quiet woman. Rama's mother is praised for all Rama's dignity, deference towards elders and a deep seriousness towards family. Anand, Narayan and Rao convey that motherhood is so necessary for a woman that if she is not a mother she loses her essential traits.
At the same time children without mother are worse than animals. Having lost their mothers, Anand’s heroes are maltreated and abused by their mentors - Bakha by his father, Munoo by his Uncle and Aunt Gujri and Nur by his father. For Sohini and Leila, death of the mother means not only losing comforts of life but also losing freedom of all kinds because after the departure of their mother they have to carry the household drudgery with total responsibility.

In the absence of a mother, grandmother is always there to take care of grandchildren. It is her prime duty to work as a slave for her progeny till death. In the novel *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts* Nur’s grandmother is seventy years old and instead of being taken care of she takes a good care of her sick grandson and her son. She also works as a connecting link between Nur and his father.

The grandmother and mother are recurring images in the novels of Narayan. Very often many of his mothers and grandmothers have no names. Their characters are not drawn fully; they remain in the background as static cameos. For them, compulsory intensive training in household work is a must and it is their duty to carry this over to the younger generation. Whether it is Swami’s mother, Chandran’s mother, Savitri Krishna’s mother, Susila, Sampath’s wife Kamala, Srinivasa’s wife, Margayya’s wife, Srirama’s granny, Raju’s mother and Raman’s aunt, these characters come within the framework of ‘pativrata’ tradition where they suffer silently. They are the daughters of the soil and have inherited age-old tradition. Their courage lies in a meek or at times cheerful way of facing poverty and calamity.

Anand wants to depict that a mother could also be a victim of class system. Even in a safe relationship like motherhood, the socioeconomic pressure can be felt. In *Two*
Leaves and a Bud the coolie women want to flee from motherhood because they have no time to attend to their babies. Motherhood turns out to be a trap, a constant source of agony for poor women. They have no time to look after the children and often wish that they knew some way of preventing them from coming to the world. In the same manner, children are not always a boon for poor women. For them, children are born to die or plague their mothers because when women try to feed their babies their payment is reduced to half.

Poverty makes even mothers inhuman. Anand shows that even a mother can be a victimizer. Laxmi sells Gauri to Sheth Jai Ram Das in lieu of cash, wiping out the mortgage on her two houses as well as the cow, Chandari. The title of the novel The Old Woman and the Cow is itself taken from this event of the novel. It is a poignant story of a mother who sells her daughter to save her cow. Anand’s portrayal of Laxmi seems to be a reaction to the idealized depiction of the mother and motherhood in mythology and other Indian literatures. Anand shows how a mother can both be ideal and demonic, how she can slide down from being a venerated mother to a selfish human being.

Power that a mother exercises is the power of one who has accepted the ascribed role which facilitates the continuity and security of tradition. Bhagwanti constantly snubs Rukmani and denies her the love and attention which her brother receives and makes her realize her futile existence. Laxmi, an untouchable, is another example of a mother who internalizes patriarchal values with religious intensity by forbidding her son Bhikhu from fighting for his right. Beghum Mehtab Jilani in spite of the awareness of Maqbool’s righteousness favours her son and husband and hides their cowardice under the garb of
responsibility. Maqbool’s mother takes special pride in Maqbool and inspires him to be a martyr.

Little mother in The Serpent and the Rope is a product of patriarchy and instead of providing solace to Saroja she makes her follow the same path. Kamlamma in Kanthapura silences Ratna and calls her a shameless and wicked-tongued creature and regrets her decision of sending her to school. Narsamma is another perfect example of this category. When Moorthy is excommunicated by the society for mingling with pariahs, Narsamma, his mother is shocked and dies out of sheer shame and guilt. Her death shows the extent to which traditional values and beliefs are practised by these women. The mother internalizes the values conferred upon her and to develop right men and women out of infants becomes her prime duty.

Raja Rao idealizes and glorifies motherhood to the level of myth. He presents the legend of Kenchamma, the Goddess of the hill, as a mother protector. Raja Rao selects an elderly grandmother interested in all the happenings, gossips and inter-relations of characters as the narrator of Kanthapura. Rao sometimes goes to the extent of being envious of women: “[h]ow beautiful it is to be pregnant... Shiva will appear. I envy women that they bear children” (p.28). But at the same time he criticizes motherhood by saying that women are only good enough to be a mother. He also believes that being a mother is not a valued aspect it is a natural aspect for it is an act which every single woman performs.

There is hardly any ugly or depressing aspect of Indian social life which has not been attacked by Anand in his novels. He is considered to be a crusader for the cause of humanity. He is also no spinner of fairy tales for mere amusement of the readers; despite
all that, he does portray the sensuality of women in his novels. In a highly social novel *Untouchable*, Anand shows no inhibitions at all about his descriptions of the female form and its sex appeal. He fetishizes the body parts of Sohini throughout the novel. All the men swoon over Sohini and crave strongly to have her in their arms. Either it is Pundit Kali Nath or Lakshman or her own brother Bakha. Anand does not even spare a brother to visualize his sister as an object of desire.

In *Coolie* Munoo is only a fifteen years old boy but wherever he goes and meets other women he only feels strange attraction towards these women, which is rather erotic. He does not see the age or the gravity of the relationships. All he can see is that the person is from opposite sex- whether it is Sheila, Parvati, Lakshami or Mrs Mainwaring. In *The Old Woman and the Cow* Anand objectifies woman’s body by implying that it is forever seductive, tempting, and irresistible to men. The way everyone is after Sohini in *Untouchable*, everyone in this novel is after Gauri. Her husband Panchi has strong physical craving for her. Her Uncle Amru possesses lustful desire for her. Pandit Bhola Nath tries to seduce her. Seth also intends for the same. Major Ratan Chand Batra tries to seduce her. Dr Mahindra also has hidden sexual desire for Gauri and thinks that who would not want to loot the tender bloom of innocence of this young hillwoman. Gauri’s ‘beautiful and sin-provoking body’ is held responsible for the whole mess. For Anand, it seems, as it is presented in his novels, women are nothing but a territory to be explored.

Narayan also emulates this formula and portrays Bharati as a sensual object. The whole novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* is full of the description of Sriram’s observation of Bharati’s physical appearance while the only thing we are told about Sriram’s appearance is that he is of medium height. Sriram almost always describes her in terms of her
physical appearance and feels thrilled when she comes close to him. He always watches her with lustful eyes. He measures her body and her figure arouses wild emotions in him. By portraying these characters sensuously Anand and Narayan show how sexuality becomes threatening to the social order and at the same time they cleverly add to the interest of the novel with such sensuous descriptions.

Almost all the male-characters of Rao in the novels *The Serpent and the Rope* and *The Cat and Shakespeare* are involved in adulterous relationships. Their wives never react by reason of ignorance, fear, complacence or even indifference. Rao presents adultery in such a natural way that it seems that his female characters are socially conditioned to accept it. Neither does the wife feel humiliated nor is it a cultural or social shock to her.

Anand, Narayan and Rao on the one hand epitomize woman as a sex-symbol and on the other hand emphasize the sanctity of her virginity and chastity. Bakha, who is a victim of society and who also possesses incestuous desire for Sohini suddenly becomes protector of his sister’s honour when Pundit Kalinath molests her. Bakha is so much worried about his sister’s honour that he starts thinking as to why she is born as a girl to bring disgrace to his family. Gauri’s husband Panchi twice throws her out of the house, both the times on the suspicion regarding her chastity. Bharati is revered because of her chastity and she is portrayed as an individual who is ready to end her life if someone tries to outrage her modesty.

Rao glorifies his women’s chastity in his novels be it Saroja or Savithri. Rao makes his French heroine a symbol of purity and beauty worthy to be a wife of a Brahmin. Even Shantha, a concubine, is a pious and untouched woman who is never
touched by anyone but Pai himself. Chastity is the most important characteristic of an Indian woman. Men consider woman as an object of desire but expect her to be shy. They derive transgressive pleasure by gazing female body parts but such pleasure is denied to the woman. In the whole process, a woman is projected as someone who possesses magical power. But this supposed magical power never helps her in uplifting her status. On the contrary, it gives a feeling that woman is powerful so she must be conditioned and controlled.

Anand, who is basically influenced by Western thoughts and finds it an effective way to the upliftment of men, does not think it favourable for the betterment of Indian women. In his later novels only his heroes are involved in bringing about change while his female protagonists stagnate and follow the same old traditional way lacking any ideological stance or vision. His only attempt to bring women on par with men in the novel *The Old Woman and the Cow* fails miserably.

Narayan does not change significantly over the years; right from the beginning he, in his own way is guarded about his claims for the independence of women and men. He conveys that women would pursue their interest more vigorously if they were less under the thrall of conditions and wants the world of men to change so that women can find happiness and men can also find their happiness along with women if they are generous in their sense of compassion and accommodation.

Raja Rao while, living in France and England, unlike the contemporary European intellectuals who challenged the authenticity of religious beliefs, asserts his faith in Indian culture and tradition and finds strength and consolation in Vedic ideas. He experiences the falseness of the Western ideas of love and happiness and turns to the
authentic Indian values. His women have a growing awareness of the difference between Eastern and Western civilization but they have to bow to traditional paradigm of society, which shatters their happiness and makes their existence more miserable and this is what Rao desires. Rao compares the condition of Indian women with those of European women and concludes that women in both countries encounter hardships but those who submit to the established authority lead life peacefully, if not happily, but those who revolt on the lines of Western thoughts suffer miserably.

At the time when Rao was writing *The Serpent and the Rope* the coronation of the Queen Elizabeth was to be done and it seems Rao was not very happy about it and rather felt unconvinced about a woman reigning over the nation. He who has suggested women to ‘rejoice in the rejoicement of others’, laments over the death of a man primarily because there would be a queen substituting him. Then he consoles himself by saying that for a man, death is transcendence because he is eternal. Rao does not welcome the Western liberal humanist morality and loathes the descendents of the decadent Brahmins who have destroyed the real essence of Indian tradition by mingling Western culture with the pure Indian culture.

It is true that Anand, Narayan and Rao try to define their male and female characters in relation to values other than overtly patriarchal ones of male superiority and female dependency. But in the whole process, consciously or unconsciously, they impose on women their own brands of femininity which is highly problematic and questionable. They try hard to be honorably sincere in their feelings for their female characters but all the three writers betray their limitations. Anand despite being hailed as a humanist and a champion of underdogs, unfailingly equates human consciousness with male
consciousness, thereby falling victim of entrenched patriarchal ideology. Narayan despite his intellectual awareness of predicament of female characters naively believes that a sense of accommodation by men towards women would be able to solve all the problems. Raja Rao betrays his insecurity in the overwhelming presence of ‘modern’ woman and therefore advocates return to the past where things are always in order. His ideological boundary is so much part of his cultural mindset that he cannot refrain from naturalizing women’s subordinate role. The power of the powerless does not operate anywhere.

Taken together, then, their novels may be said to register a developing tension over woman’s power in the increasingly complex modern Indian context. This tension regarding woman’s identity and power is due to the conflictual relationship between the forces of tradition and modernity played out in modern India. Therefore, writers like Anand, Narayan and Rao who are sensitive to this historical transformation foreground issues surrounding woman and make her ‘visible’. This visibility resulting in its inclusion in literature of new dimensions of experience and feelings can be counted as one of the most meaningful achievements and contributions of Anand, Narayan and Rao. Women characters in their novels may be poor, uneducated, uncivilized, unassertive, weak and passive, but they are there. They are visible, alive and struggling. And herein lies the significance of the Trio – Anand, Narayan and Rao – in terms of the momentum generated by their fictional narratives leading to the onward march of women towards emancipation and hope, history notwithstanding.

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