CHAPTER - III
THE TRADITIONAL WOMEN

3.1 GENERAL

The third chapter about the traditional women of India pictures the various stages of women in her life and the problems faced by her at different levels. It starts with her childhood which is followed by her role as a daughter-in-law, wife, mother, mother-in-law and grandmother. R.K.Narayan’s successful portrayal of woman as she grows up from childhood to grandmother in a traditional Indian family form the content of this chapter.

The Briharanyaka Upanishad describes the creation of woman thus:

He, verily had no delight. Therefore he, who is alone has no delight. He desired a second. He became as large as a woman and a man in close embrace. He caused that self to fall into two parts. From that arose husband and wife. (Radhakrishnan 195)

This passage contains the basic idea of the indivisible whole, which is split into two halves in order that the mystery of creation be realized. If imagined as two
separate halves. They complement each other. The feminine half, Sakti, energizes its masculine counterpart Siva.

Siva represents the static aspect of the supreme substance, and Sakti its Kinetic aspect: the term being derived from the root ‘Sak’ which denotes capacity of action or power. (Woodroffe 191)

This glorification of women as an all-powerful entity slowly led to their slavery. In a patriarchal society like India, though women are worshipped as Goddesses, they are expected to lead a self-sacrificing life. Instead of being treated as equals they are considered ‘the others’, ‘the weaker sex’.

An Indian woman’s self-perception as also the society expectations from her have for long been largely determined by the complex of ideas and values and beliefs codified in the ‘Manusmriti’.

In childhood a woman should be under her father’s control, in youth under her husband’s and when her husband is dead, under her son’s. She should not have independence. (Manu 5.148)
In mythical terms the dominant feminine prototype still is the chaste, patient, self-denying, long-suffering wife, Sita, admirably supported by other figures like Savitri, Draupadi etc. The values imparted by these ideal women still linger in the consciousness of the women of the present day.

As in the words of Esha Day

Women in fiction depend on women in reality.

Patriarchy which is the ruling social system almost all over the world ordains that a woman’s place is home, her role as a wife and mother is quite often synonymous with her total human existence. (Day 9)

It is true that the early Indian writers occupied themselves with the sufferings of the traditional Indian women. The image of woman as wife occupies a central place in Indo-Anglian Literature. Most often she appears in her ‘Padivrata Image’. To quote Dorothy Spencer “It seems clear that in the case of woman as wife we are dealings with a literary tradition Sita, Savitri, Sakuntala…” (Spencer 17)

Little critical attention has been paid to an in-depth study of Narayan’s protagonists and the role the feminine plays in their lives. The critics have
overlooked this area in spite of the fact that Narayan himself emphasizes in his diaries and interviews the momentous importance of the feminine in his life.

R.K. Narayan, the true representative of the Indian society has pictured such traditional Indian women in his early novels. This chapter brings to limelight, the shadowy existence of such oppressed Indian women. A careful study of women in R.K. Narayan’s Swami And Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, The Dark Room, The English Teacher, Mr. Sampath, The Financial Expert, Waiting for Mahatma, Vender of Sweets and The World of Nagaraj is made in this chapter.

The traditional women of these novels found glorification in their role as mother and wife. The traditional women who can otherwise be classified as ‘the Sita-Savitri type or the ‘Padivratas’ possess the following qualities. They are docile, submissive, self-sacrificing, unquestioning and dependent. They blindly imitate their role models and find glorification in their sufferings. Various stages in her life such as daughter, daughter-in-law, wife, mother, mother-in-law and grandmother are pictured by R.K. Narayan in his novels.

3.2 DAUGHTERS IN R.K. NARAYAN’S NOVELS

Traditionally the Indian women accepted the frame work of family with the blind faith and rarely showed a rebellious trend. In India from the days of
Atharva Veda, down to the middle ages and then to the present time the birth of a 
girl has been looked upon with resignation. The force of tradition is operative in 
the way the birth of a girl is viewed in the family. Narayan in his novel, ‘The 
Financial Expert’ clearly shows how a girl child is unwelcome in a family and 
explores the reasons behind the traditional view. The daughter in a Traditional 
Hindu family is a burden to her parents. The evil practice of dowry system which 
prevails in the Indian society makes her an unwanted and highly treaded object in 
the family. Margayya, the financial expert blames his sisters for his family’s 
bankruptcy.

Why am I here? Three daughters were born to my 
father. Five cart loads of paddys came to us every half 
year from the fields. We just heaped them up on the 
floor of the hall, we had five halls to our house; but 
where has it all gone? To the daughters. By the time 
my father found husbands for them, there was 
nothing left for us to eat at home. (FE 5; pt.1)

As a daughter, she receives the protection, affection and care of her 
father, the affection and care of her mother, but is never a symbol of pride. She 
knows that she is a daughter, ‘a duhita’ (duh-to milk, duhita-milk maid), one who 
milks away everything, one who drains the family’s resources. She is therefore
relegated to a secondary status; She is aware of the preferential treatment given to her brother.

When people considered the birth of a female child a burden or a curse, the birth of a male child is considered a boon or treasure. In the same novel it is said “a man who begets a son is blessed in three lives, because he gives away the greatest treasure on earth.” (FE 5; pt.7)

Women themselves consider the birth of a girl child a dis-appointedment. In ‘The Vender of Sweets’, a coconut seller comments “No one who prays at the temple is ever disappointed with a daughter.” (VOS 179; Ch. 12). Whereas in the same novel the birth of a son is valued as a treasure. “A new son in the house is a true treasure in this life and beyond life.” (VOS. 179; Ch.12)

Thus due to the domestic, social and economical constraints prevailed in the Indian society, the very birth of a female baby is viewed as an undesirable and disappointing affair by both the sexes.

As mentioned earlier the reason for this negative approach or attitude is the evil practice of dowry system. This tradition is so deep rooted that even women themselves spoke of it without any guilt. Chandran’s mother in ‘The Bachelor of Arts’ loudly proclaims that there is nothing wrong in giving and receiving dowry.
My father gave 7000 in cash to your father and over 2000 in silver vessels and spent nearly 5000 on wedding celebrations. What was wrong in it? How are we any the worse for it? It is the duty of every father to set some money apart for securing a son-in-law.

(B.A 84; ch. 9)

Thus tradition and custom made the very birth of a girl child an unpleasant and dreadful affair.

In the middle class there are stricter restrictions on the girls. They are not allowed to move out of their home as they need not work. Even if they went out they are escorted by some elders or small children in the family. Malathy in ‘The Bachelor of Arts’ is always seen with her little brother. Even married women like Savitri in ‘The Dark Room’ are afraid to go even hundred yards from their home unescorted.

The restrictions prevalent in Indian family prevent the Indian girls from youthful love before marriage. Girls are generally not allowed to mix with boys during their adolescence. If love is felt by the boys as in ‘The Bachelor of Arts’, he can hardly express it. Malathy in the same novel is blissfully ignorant of chandran’s infatuation. The girl’s feelings are not shown as they are rarely
expressed in real life. It is not common for girls in the middle class Hindu family to express their love or make decisions.

As the girls are confined at home the most part of their, ‘pleasing others’ becomes their prime duty at home. Shashi Deshpande rightly judges that, "Everything in girl’s life, it seemed was shaped to that single purpose of pleasing a male." (Despande 79) Sumati and Kamala in R.K Narayan’s ‘The Dark Room’ are the perfect examples of this type. Girls are trained right from their birth to please others. “You must be a good girl, otherwise people won’t like you.” (DR 46; Ch. 4)

This is the sacred mandra engraved on their minds by the elders at home. The mothers, especially are expected to train the daughters properly for their future. When Sumati and kamala failed to please their father, only their mother was blamed for it. “Hear that is not the place to put the lantern. Do I want illumination for my feet? Bad training, rotten training.” (DR 46; Ch. 4)

When the girls are trained in the domestic affairs, the boys are expected to keep away from the domestic traits. Many discriminations are shown in the upbringing of boys and girls. In a male chauvinistic society like India boys are given a long rope, while the girls are confined at home. Even the girls themselves never minded such discriminations. On the contrary they are well
contented with their role. The ‘Navaratri’ incident in ‘The Dark Room’ shows the different roles expected of a girl and a boy in a traditional Indian family. Before ‘Navaratri’ Babu tried to help his sisters in arranging the dolls. But his help was turned down by his sisters with the words, “It is not a boy’s business. This is entirely our affair.” (37;ch.4)

The girls found nothing wrong in the discrimination shown. They rather felt justified in their role. So, they could easily order their brother to go out and play like a man. “Are you a girl to take a hand in the doll’s business? Go and play cricket, you are a man.” (DR 37; Ch 4)

Even though girls have access to education, by stressing that certain courses are more fit or natural for girls than boys. The educational system through its curriculum had denied women’s access to positions of power and dominance and keeps women under strict control. A woman defines herself in a context of ‘Nurturer, caretaker and helpmate’ while a man associates himself with autonomous thinking, clear decision making and responsible action.

A century has gone by: the format of the girl’s education has changed for she too studies the same subjects as a boy. While for him, it is education ‘per se’, for her it is just an attraction - one more in a list of qualities to entice man into marriage.
Thus, a boy is engaged in different activities, which always kept him outside the premises of his house. Whereas a girl’s activities kept her confined at home and thus a girl child slowly becomes a slave at home. Ramani’s angry outburst in ‘The Dark Room’ also confirms the fact that in an Indian household, boys and girls have entirely two different roles to play. “Who asked you to go near the doll’s business? Are you a girl? Tell me, Are you a girl?” (47; Ch. 4).

When the girls are shown as timid, helpless, tender-hearted, dependent, creatures, the boys are pictured as strong, healthy, firm, loud, proud, independent and dominant personalities. Ramani’s advice to his son, “You are a sportsman. You must eat a lot and grow strong.” (198; Ch. 11). And Savitri’s pride at her son’s work, “Could you have made a thing like this? You prated so much when he began the work?” (39; Ch. 4), clearly shows the expectations of the Indian parents from their sons. Babu, though he was afraid of his father he did not hesitate to question him, when his mother disappeared suddenly. When the girls were afraid to approach their father, it was Babu who said firmly, “You leave it to me, I will speak to father and ask him to search.” (199; Ch. 11) He even made up his mind to inform the police also through his friend Chandran. In his need to be strong, in his concern to be kind, in his willingness to love, the brother is protective and affectionate towards his sister, continuing this even after her marriage.
In the patriarchal society of India a woman cannot survive without an authoritative male figure. Growing up in an environment where close sibling bond is encouraged, she finds it easy to accept her brother as a protector. What emerges out of such environment is a strong bond between siblings. Even in Mr. Sampath, the mother feels proud about her son’s bravery. “This little fellow Ramu, he was like an elder. I never knew he could take charge of me so well.”(Mr.S 33; Ch. 2 ). Thus a son is expected to step into the shoes of his father.

In the same novel the author contrasts the upbringing of girls. Srinivas the printer wonders about his wife’s behavior. He raves against her upbringing

His wife as a child must have pleased her grandmother by her behavior and been rewarded for it. A child’s (girl’s) life was reduced to a mere approved behavior in the midst of father, mother, grandmother and uncles: and later in life parents-in-law, husband and so on and on endlessly till one had no opportunity to think of one’s own view on any matter till it grew into a mania as in his wife.

(37; Ch. 2)
This expression dearly sums up the non existence of Indian girls. Through this R.K. Narayan has shown the pitiable state of every Indian girl, who is forced to lead an empty life to please others, forgetting her individuality.

3.3 DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW AND MOTHERS-IN-LAW

The sufferings endured silently by the Indian girls, at their home, slowly extended to their next stage, that is the stage of daughter-in-law. In the second stage of life the womanhood was faced with great peril. The ideal of womanhood stood in danger of mutilation. It is not only man woman herself as a mother-in-law found an easy victim in the gentle, confiding and unresisting womanhood. Women’s role as daughters-in-law is the most critical role. She is sold as a commodity. The highest bidder secured a comfortable life. The exploitation starts even before the marriage. At the marriage ceremony, the bride’s family is expected to be very careful and obliging. Even for petty matters quarrel brewed. Always it originated from the bridegroom’s party. The bride’s party is expected to keep the groom’s side at good humour. This situation is beautifully pictured by R.K.Narayan in his ‘The Vendor of Sweets’. On the night of the wedding feast an embarrassing incident occurs.

Some one who held the highest precedence in the family hierarchy was given a half torn banana leaf to dine on and was seated in the company of children
instead in top-row. This threatened to develop into a first class crisis but the girl’s father openly apologized for the slip and all was forgotten. (VOS 168; ch.12)

People quarreled over the dowry also. Something that upset all the women folk of the bridegroom’s party was that the bride was not provided with the gold waist band that had been promised when the original list of Jewellery was drawn. When finally it arrived it was found to be made not of one gold sheet but a number of little gold bars intertwined with silk cords. The women felt it was down right cheating. They would have gone even to the extend of stopping the marriage. Blinded by tradition sometimes women become their own enemies. When Jagan interfered he was snubbed with the words. “Don’t make a fool of yourself so soon why don’t you leave these problems for the women-folk to discuss in the way they want.” (168; ch. 12)

Very often women are responsible for their own sufferings. After such a big, fussy marriage, the girl is not allowed to lead a peaceful and happy life with her husband. As a daughter-in-law her responsibilities increases. In a joint family system, a daughter in law’s role is the most complicated and difficult role to play. She has to satisfy everyone at home, and especially her mother-in-law.
Satisfying a mother-in-law is the most difficult job for a woman. Like a circus commander, the mother-in-law is ready to coach the new arrival of her family. After the marriage proper training is given to the girl by the mother-in-law in all the household activities.

She had her own duties in a large joint household;
She had to do her share of work in the kitchen, helping her mother-in-law in cooking, serving, scrubbing and sweeping the house, washing the vessels and finally awaiting her mother-in-law for every meal. (VOS 169; ch 12)

Krishnan’s mother in ‘The English Teacher’ expected her daughter-in-law to be an obedient pupil. Housekeeping was a grand affair for her. The essence of her life consisted in the thrills and pangs and satisfaction that she derived in running a well-ordered house-hold. She was unsparing and violent when she met slovenliness. “If a woman can’t take charge of a house and run it sensibly she must be made to get into a man’s dress and go out in a procession.” (31; ch. 2)

Krishnan’s wife being the last daughter never had any housekeeping experiences before her marriage. It was only her mother in law who gave her proper training in the domestic work. Modesty, docility, obedience and
cooperation are the qualities expected of a traditional Hindu wife. At first
Krishnan was anxious about his wife’s relationship with his mother. But when
susila won her mother in law’s approval by picking up many sensible points in
cooking and household economy, he was greatly relieved. His mother’s
appreciation, “Susila is a modest girl. She is not obstinate.” (32; Ch. 2) pleased
him very much and he was relieved of all his anxieties.

Nagaraj’s wife Sita in ‘The World of Nagaraj’ has to undergo similar
torture in the hands of her mother-in-law. Sita, true to her name was a
submissive, timid little creature. When she was married she looked small and
helpless. She was timid and bashful. Nagaraj’s mother was another tyrant who
ordered about her daughter-in-law like commander-in-chief.

His mother in those days was like a commander-in-
chief and the girl meekly accepted the role of a
lackey at home, for ever at the beck and call of her
mother in law trailing behind her all the time hardly
ever coming into his room. (WON 25; ch.1)

Sita was afraid even to close the door fully when they were alone. She always
left a crack open saying. “Mother may not like it. Mother may want to call me,
she is alone in the kitchen. I must be near at hand she may mistake me.”
(25; ch. 1)
Even for petty mistakes, the daughter-in-law was taken for task. Once when Sita toppled a filter, she was greatly relieved to see that her mother-in-law was not on the scene. “How lucky mother was not there! She had gone out to fetch wood chips from the back yard.” (25; ch.7)

Sita was afraid even to give company to her husband with a free heart. She was afraid of her mother-in-law’s disapproval. Only when she went to temple, Sita relaxed and came near him. Even this short break came to an end, as soon as she saw people returning from temple. “Suddenly she would wrench herself free and run in so that when mother returned she would see him alone.” (26; ch. 1).

The bitter taunts of her mother-in-law continued even when she became old. Though she hobbled about the home like a frail ghost asking inane questions, she kept inspected and watching every corner of the house. She also made irksome remarks about Sita’s house keeping and annoyed her unnecessarily till her death.

The prime duty of a daughter-in-law is to fill the house with children. If a woman failed to have a baby she alone was held responsible. It is one more stick to beat the daughter-in-law with. In ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ Jagan’s mother blames her daughter-in-law thus.
All one ask of a girl is that she at least bring some children in to house as a normal person should. No one is asking for gold and silver; one may get cheated with regard to a gold belt even. Why can’t a girl bear children as a million others in the world do.

(VOS 171; ch. 12)

Jagan’s wife Ambika has to defend herself showing her family photograph of one hundred and three members. She was even forced to undergo a remedy of visiting a particular temple to get rid of her barreness. No one cared to ask for her opinion or willingness. She heard the order when it was passed on to her husband. “Next Tuesday we are going on to the temple on Badri Hill. You had better apply leave for two days. Your wife will also come.” (173; ch 12)

Whenever anything went wrong she was held responsible and scolded severely for it. She had to bear the bitter remarks of her mother-in-law silently, due to her barreness. The bitter remarks of her mother-in-law made her life miserable. Once when the food was salted twice, she was scolded harshly.

One does not ask for extraordinary things; they are not for us, we are not destined to enjoy the spectacle
of a gold waist band, like hundred others but one wants at least a sensible… (177; ch. 12)

Even before her mother-in-law could finish her words, for the first time Ambika retarted shrewdly. “Why are you so obsessed with the gold belt? What has it do with salt or sugar? Have you never seen a gold belt in all your life?” (160; ch. 12).

That put an end to all her humiliations and miseries. Even then it was only a temporary relief. Only after the birth of her son could she keep her head upright. “She held herself up proudly having now attained the proper status in the family.” (180; ch 13).

As in ‘The vendor of Sweets’ even in ‘The World of Nagaraj’ the daughter-in-law was harassed by her mother-in-law for her inability to produce children. The mother-in-law could forgive all the mistakes and insults of her first daughter-in-law, when she provided the family with an issue. Whereas Sita with all her submissiveness, failed to please her mother-in-law, as she was barren and had no issue.

As usual various measures to cure her barrenness were suggested by her mother-in-law, who fancied herself an expert, having inherited medical knowledge from her herbalist grandfather. She would sit before Sita, to
supervise her chewing neem leaves every morning. When Sita refused to eat any more neem leaves her mother-in-law left her with the cunning remarks.

Very well remember that there is no deficiency on our side. Nagaraj is normal. Don’t you see Gopi’s wife bearing a son within two years? As the proverb goes, what can the hand that hold the plough achieve, if the hand that lifts the rice pot is unlucky? (47; ch. 4).

Sita, the unlucky woman has to bear these taunts silently. Also she has to undergo other remedies such as a forty-day penance and special pujas and the pilgrimages to remote temples. This continued for quite some time and finally her mother-in-law gave up with the bitter remarks assuming that there was nothing wrong on her son’s part. Thus unreasonably the daughters-in-law were tortured by the mothers-in-law.

3. 4. WIVES IN R.K. NARAYAN’S NOVELS

Women’s role as wife dominates the novels of R.K. Narayan. In the earlier stages as a daughter and daughter-in-law she has been trained to suffer mutely in order to please the men folk. Sacrificing her individuality, freedom and happiness, she leads a meaningless life. Though she has been prepared mentally
right from her childhood, when faced with reality, it is so bitter and intolerable that at some stage in her life, she tries to shun away from the reality. But she is so accustomed to that kind of unrealistic life that she finds no appeal in a carefree world. Suffering and sacrifice has become a part and parcel of her life. Finally she limps back to her traditional role and feels glorified in it. Savitri in ‘The Dark Room’ is the best example of a traditional Indian housewife and mother. So in this section a detailed analysis of her character is done. It is followed by other such wives in R.K. Narayan’s other novels. The image of woman as wife occupies a central place in Indo-Anglian literature. Most often she appears in her ‘Padivrata-image’. As an Indian woman is conditioned to believe that she is weak and that men are figures of authority she turns to her father, brother or any other man under whose age she is; in her youth this man is her husband. As a new bride she has no say in her home, she is awed by her husband’s power and idolizes him. As she cannot fathom a complete life without her husband, as the position of the widow is often socially tenuous and frightening, she wishes to die before her husband. The man all powerful, wants to demonstrate his superiority over the woman; he controls her life, her actions and behaviours. Myths about woman as loving mother and evil allurer makes man to eulogize the constant mother while he relegates the irresistible ever changing woman to the lowliest status. As Frieda Das rightly remarks.
Never has man dug a deeper rut for himself than did
the Hindu when he worshipped Goddesses and
degraded woman. When he adored the mother and
slighted the wife (Ranade 255)

To him the wife becomes an object he can manipulate. But as the woman is
indoctrined about the necessity of seeking advice from her elders, she is “Willing
to adjust and often abides by the advice of elders. This becomes a major
contributory factor for marital happiness.” (Khanna & Varghese 49) She is
usually subservient to her husband. It may be said that an Indian woman puts on
a façade of happiness because of the inordinate masochists pride she desires
through suffering.

R.K. Narayan has brought out the sufferings of a middle class Indian wife
with a remarkable sensibility in his ‘The Dark Room’. This story of domestic
disharmony has three main characters. Savitri, the tradition-bound, self-effacing
Indian wife. Ramani, the chauvinistic, callous, philandering husband and
Shantabai, the coquettish-type woman. Even fifteen years of married life has
failed to produce real chord between Ramani and Savitri. Due to Ramani’s
dominating attitude, Savitri’s life becomes miserable. Sacrificing her
individuality she has to adjust herself to the swiftly changing moods of her
husband. Ramani, the typical Indian husband expects his wife to crawl before
him at his every beck and call. In his conception a wife’s prime and only duty is cooking. “If the cook can’t cook properly, do the work yourself. What have you to do better than that?” (2; ch. 1).

Kitchen is her domain. Beyond that her voice should not be raised against anything. She is not given even the right to decide for her own son. If she dares she is snubbed with the words. “Go and do any work you like in the Kitchen, but leave the training of a grown up boy to me. It is none of a woman’s business.” (1; ch 1).

It is the same Ramani, who speaks about women’s liberation and their equality in the company of Shantabai later in the novel. He says. “It was all nonsense to keep men and women separate in water tight compartments; women are as good as men and must be treated accordingly.”(73;ch.5) This statement of Ramani, proves him as a loud hypocrite with different codes of conduct for different persons in different situations. The fact that he provides for the household expenses makes him the lord and master of his house.

A close analysis of the character of Savitri, reveals two different faces of Savitri. The one who silently withstood the humiliations inflicted on her by her husband and the other who reacted boldly right at the face of her husband and
walked out of him with confidence. Savitri, of the first type is discussed in this chapter in detail.

Savitri, the unhappy and frustrated wife of Ramani has to accept the tyranny of her husband silently in his presence. She dare not voice her opinion or show her feelings. All that she could do is to fume at her impotency when she is alone. "How impotent she was, she thought. She had not the slightest power to do anything at home and that after fifteen years of married life." (6; ch. 1).

There was no understanding between them even after fifteen years of married life. Almost everyday she was found fault and shouted at by her husband. On such occasions she could neither retort nor keep silence. If she was silent Ramani said, "Saving up your energy by being silent! Saving it up for what purpose? When a man asks you something you could do worse than honour him with a reply." (3; ch. 1).

If she offered an explanation she would be told to shut her mouth Savitri has to adjust herself to the quickly changing mood of her husband. Even the hooting of his car informed her of his temperament. "Savitri's ears were sufficiently attuned to the nuances and she could tell a few minutes advance what temper her husband was in." (12; ch 1). Everyone in the house felt relieved when the hooting was mild. Savitri could take any liberties with him now. She
could be recklessly happy and free. She was even petted and pampered by her lord. “You have to learn a lot yet. You are still a child, perhaps a precocious child, but a child all the same.” (15; ch 1).

The same Ramani who was so gentle kind and loving behaved wildly when he chose. During the Navratri festival when he saw the house in complete darkness, his anger knew no bounds. He showed all his anger on his son Babu and even slapped him harshly. When Savitri interfered he said severely, “leave him alone, he does not need your petting.” (48; ch. 4)

Faint with anger, Savitri dashed into the dark room, her usual retreat. The dark room plays a significant role in the Indian household. It is the place where generally the unwanted things are dumped. But in Naresh K. Jain’s view,

The dark room (reminiscent of the ‘Kop bhavan’ to which queen Kekai had retired to register her protest against king Dasrath’s decision to declare Ram as his heir) to which Savitri retires in order to protest against her husband became a symbol of a woman’s fate from which escape is impossible except through her own volition and sometimes not even then. (Jain 13).
Savitri retreated into this dark room, whenever she was hurt by her callous husband, to mend her wounds. To her it is like a purgatory, where she sulked away all her anger and miseries. When she came out of it she felt renewed and refreshed.

Savitri finds it intolerable to see her son beaten severely by her ruthless husband. Her interference only added fuel to his anger. In his view Savitri’s anger is only a stage show. He could not understand her motherly feelings. According to Ramani a boy should be brought up only with occasional thrashings. He does not need the petting and pampering of his mother. Generally the Indian men are of the view that only the father is capable of dealing with his son. For example when the cook discussed this matter with his friends in the backyard, he said. “It is no business of a wife’s to butt in when the father is dealing with his son. It is a bad habit. Only a battered son will grow into a sound man.” (DR 50; ch .4).

When Ranga, admitted that his wife also was like Savitri and women generally are terrible, the cook then explained how women should always be kept under control. “Only once has my wife tried to interfere and then I nearly broke her bones. She has learnt to leave me alone now. Women must be taught their place.” (50; ch. 4). Such is the view of the majority of Indian men folk. To them women are only the weaker sex, who should be handled ruthlessly whenever the
need arises. She is not treated as his equal. She is considered fit only for
domestic traits. She is unfit even to mould her own children. Nobody bothered to
understand her yearnings. Ramani just ignored Savitri’s sulking. He “… decided
to ignore severely his wife’s absence. He was going to show her that sulking
would not pay.” (53; ch. 4).

He demonstrated his calm indifference by humming and whistling when
he spoke to his daughters, he raised his voice to convey the message that the
festival would not be spoiled by her sulking. He indicated his indifference
through his actions and words. He enjoyed the food prepared by the cook and
complimented him elaborately for the nice food. He promised his daughter to
buy sweets for the evening. He did everything purposely to convey his wife that
no one was indispensable.

Savitiri’s sulking affected only the children. Babu loathed himself for
crying like a girl and resolved he would never cry again in his life. The girls felt
scared and disappointed. They decided to bring Savitiri’s friend Janamma, to
coax their mother out of the dark room. Janamma, the friend and confidant of
Savitri is a typical Indian woman, who never opposed or argued with her
husband at any circumstances. She firmly believed that a wife should follow her
husband’s footsteps. Janamma stressed the importance of patience of wives. She
cited examples of her mother, grand mother and aunt and narrated how they
patiently withstood the cruelty and indifference of their husbands. Savitri began to feel foolish about her own resentment and came out of the dark room immediately. Thus under the name of tradition Indian women withstood the eccentricities of their husbands. ‘A woman’s place is with her husband’. This adage is never forgotten by the traditional women.

Savitiri’s likes and dislikes were never taken into account. Even their outing was not preplanned. Ramani just ordered her to accompany him to the theatre. When Savitri was hesitant to leave the children, Ramani declared furiously. “Are you coming out at all or shall I go alone? You can stay here and pet the little darling” (25; ch.6) Inspite of this harsh indifferent invitation, Savitri could enjoy the outing, because, Ramani’s undivided attention and care made her very happy. Though she was treated like a showpiece, she enjoyed his husbanding. Ramani fussed over her because it was his duty to do so. He was proud to exhibit her beauty. “He spoke to her, because, he was in a position to do it, and it made him feel important, he enjoyed his role of a husband.” (27; ch 3.) Even this pretended love made Savitri very happy and grateful.

After the entrance of Shantabai, a drastic change comes over Savitri. The inner self is awakened. She tries to evaluate herself. Her first reaction was anger. Her helplessness made her unhappy and frustrated. She hated herself for it. She felt angry with him and unhappy at being angry. It sapped all her energy. She
would have given anything to lighten her mind of its burden and to be able to think of her husband without suspicion. “Just a word from him would do, just an unangry word; even a lie, a soothing lie. Unpleasant thought seemed to corrode her soul.” (93; ch 6).

But she feared to question him. She decided that it would be better to suffer in silence than to venture a question. When her husband’s affair was confirmed by Gangu her friend, she looked at herself in the mirror and tried to justify her husband’s action.”

Perhaps I’m not good enough for him. Let me admit my complexion has become rather sooty and these dark rings under my eyes. I am getting careless about the hair and braid it anyhow, it’s hardly his fault, if he can’t like my appearance very much. (104; ch. 6).

She dressed herself with great care and awaited her husband’s return. Upon this, we find a typical traditional wife, lived to the Manu code. “A virtuous wife should constantly serve her husband like a God, even if he behaves badly, freely indulges in lust, and is devoid of any good qualities.” (Manu 115)

But Ramani’s affair with Shantabai shatters Savitri’s conventional faith and belief in her husband. She behaves in a strikingly unconventional way and
gives her ultimatum. “You are not having me and her at the same time, understand? I go out of this house this minute.” (111; ch. 6).

While Savitri could take this daring step, her friend Janamma is downright traditional and she gloried herself in her traditional role as a wife and mother. Janamma is an elderly, rich lady. Her husband is a public prosecutor. She never moved freely among people. But she is a good friend of Savitri. Whenever Savitri had any problem, she came to her rescue. She is a perfect example of a typical Indian wife who adores her husband inspite of all his shortcomings. She firmly believes that wives have to be silent and patient. She proudly proclaims that

As for me, I have never opposed my husband or argued with him at any time in my life. I might have occasionally suggested an alternative, but nothing more. What he does is right. It is a wife’s duty to feel so. (59; ch 4).

Silently accepting the given role is the trade mark of all Indian women. When she came to Savitri’s place to cajole her out of the dark room, she narrated fitting instances to stress the importance of traditional values in Indian women. She quoted examples of
... her own grandmother who slaved cheerfully for her husband who had three concubines at home, her aunt who was beaten everyday by her husband and had never uttered a word of protest for fifty years; another friend of her mother’s who was prepared to jump into a well if her husband so directed her; and so on... (60; ch 4).

With her examples she not only cajoled Savitri out of the dark room but also made her feel foolish about her resentment.

This is the traditional pattern of a good Indian wife in total subjection to her husband and master. She even justifies the impetuousness of men saying.

Men are impetuous One moment they will be all temper and the next all kindness. Men have to bear many worries and burdens and you must overlook it if they are sometimes unreasonable (60; ch 4).

Margayya's wife in 'The Financial Expert' is another example of an oppressed Indian housewife. Like a dutiful Indian wife she awaits her husband for every meal. She does not hesitate to wait even till midnight. It pleases the male(ego) who remarks happily, “What? You have not had your dinner Yet! he said having pleased that she had waited for him.” (FE 30; pt. 1).
Wives awaiting their husbands for meal is an usual thing found in an Indian household. Even in ‘The Dark Room’ when Savitri awaited Ramani, he remarked sarcastically, “What a dutiful wife! Would rather starve than precede her husband.” (DR 14; ch 1).

Wives are not expected to question their husbands on any occasion. When Margayya’s wife questioned him worriedly about his regular late coming, Margayya shut her mouth with an arrogant reply, “I must ask your permission, I suppose.” (FE 30; pt. 1). Majority of the Indian husbands are alike in this aspect. They could not tolerate probing questions, especially from their wives. They feel it below their dignity to answer such questions.

A wife is expected to do all the domestic works to the satisfaction of her husband. The men folk never came forward to share their work. When Margayya saw cobwebs dangling like tapestry, he thought furiously, “She ought to clean it and not expect me to have to see such things.” (30; pt. 1).

It is not only house keeping but also child rearing is done by the Indian wives. Though she is not considered fit enough to handle her son, whenever Babu fell into fits of anger, she is held responsible. “She has completely spoilt him beyond remedy. I must take him out of her hands.” (43; pt. 1). As Babu grew up he became unmanageable and more troublesome, his mother lost her
peace and rest. When she informed about it to her husband, she was asked not to get cantankerous about such a small child. Margayya, who disliked adverse remarks about his son, blindly blamed his wife, when she helplessly remarked. "I wish you could stay at home and look after him instead of coming in the evening and dangling him for a moment after he has exhausted all his tricks." (10; pt. 1). This was not expected of an Indian wife. She is expected to maintain peace at home when her husband earned their livelihood. So Margayya made a sarcastic remark, "Yes gladly, provided you agree to go out and arrange loans for all those village idiots." (10; pt. 1).

The simple fact that his wife is an illiterate and unemployed made him throw such challenges. In turn for the financial support of her husband, a wife is expected to do all the household duties and child rearing all by herself. She is made to feel inferior in front of everyone. She felt uneasy even in front of the new arrival, her daughter-in-law. Her daughter-in-law being an educated modern girl never came out of her room to help the mother-in-law. She had to call her a dozen times before every meal. This made her feel inferior and she thought, "I'm probably not good enough for a modern girl like her." (156; pt. 4).

But even this modern girl who came from a sophisticated family was not able to control her husband with all her superior training. Like her mother-in-law she was also afraid to question her husband even when he came home late every
day, spending his time with cheap theatre girls. She has to seek the help of her father-in-law. “I wanted to come and see you. Everyday this happens; he comes to home everyday at two o’clock. If I ask him, he ... he... I’m. afraid of him.” (171; pt. 5).

Brinda was afraid to question him. She was afraid her husband would drive her out of home, if she questioned. Only in a traditional society like India, even educated girls like Brinda could be threatened by their husbands. “If I speak ... he threatens to drive me out. It’s that Pal ... can’t you do something to keep him away.” (172; pt. 5).

She feels totally lost and helpless. It is the case of majority Indian women, in a tradition bound society like India. A traditional Indian wife derives pleasure from her sufferings. For this very reason of pride in suffering and due to years of inculcation about the necessity to accept her role, the Indian woman may not like her husband to step in and do her work. Subtle indoctrination atrophies a woman’s desire to change her position as an object and to exercise her free will. She compromises her stand for she is taught the importance and necessity of a stable marriage and family—family as a security, as a source of emotional strength.
Nagaraj's wife Sita, is another such oppressed woman. She slaves for her husband and family. Nagaraj himself recognizes that, "she had become a prisoner in the house." (WON 14; ch. 1). In the early days of their marriage she was too timid and bashful. She was totally under the control of her mother-in-law. She was afraid even to spend her free time happily with her husband. She hardly gave him company with free heart. All the time she was worried about her mother-in-law's comment and reaction. She was more bothered about her role as a daughter-in-law than as a wife. Her infertility added fuel to her miseries. Not knowing who is the cause of the barrenness, she silently bore all the insults hurled on her by her mother-in-law. Even when her mother-in-law became old, she patiently withstood her constant interference. Thus a traditional Indian wife, in her anxiety to please, in her yearning to be recognised, in her desire to gain prominent position in the family hierarchy, longs for a child, especially a son a social redeemer. Thus perpetuating male dominance and patriarchy the son becomes her symbol of power.

Some times even when the women are given freedom and treated equally they refuse to accept their freedom. They are so deeply rooted in tradition that they glorify themselves in their traditional role as wife and mother. Suseela in 'The English Teacher' is the best example for such type. With her eagerness, obedience and modesty Suseela was able to get the approval of her mother-in-
law in no time. She was more interested in the domestic affairs than other leisure activities. Her husband, the English teacher has to force her to have a servant, so that she could spend more time for reading. "I don't like you to spend all your time cooking either tiffin of food." (47; ch. 2). But Suseela, who found happiness in performing the duties of a traditional Indian wife finds nothing wrong in being a housewife alone. She retorts happily, "But I like it, what is wrong in it?" (47; ch. 2).

Krishnan has to force her to spend her time in other activities. He is not the usual dominating husband, we find in an Indian set up. He is different. He enjoys giving freedom to his wife and treating her equally. He insists that. "You must spend some more time reading or stitching or singing. Man or woman is not born merely to cook and eat." (48; ch. 2).

But Suseela's interests are more in housekeeping and child rearing than in other activities. Though she is blessed with a generous, understanding and loving husband, she is keen in performing the role of a perfect Indian wife.

We have similar characters in 'Mr. Sampath' also. Srinivas wife, even when she was given all the privileges to run her family and called the master of the house, her mind was preoccupied with traditional values. She also dutifully awaits her husband for every meal. When Srinivas told her to eat when she was hungry she firmly retorted, "I certainly can't do that."(Mr.S 38; ch.2) The
deeprooted traditional notion in her made her to make this comment. She was puzzled when Srinivas told her to do the shopping herself. She couldn’t understand whether to take his remark literally or to treat it as a joke. Though his job kept him out side home round the clock, she found happiness in cooking for her husband and awaiting his return. Srinivas felt pity for her mechanical life.

Srinivas noted it and felt pity for her. He viewed her life as it was; a lonely bare life. He had not the slightest notion how she was spending her days. She probably spend them awaiting his return from the office. (48; ch.3)

Awaiting her husband’s return was the prime goal of her life. She was exhilarated like a child when her husband took one day off from his work. Nothing interested her except her domestic work.

In the beginning, as soon as she saw her husband after so many months of separation, with tears in her eyes all that she could ask was. “What is the matter with you? Why do you neglect us in this way? You have not written for months; what have I done that I should be treated like this.” (32; Ch 2).
When Srinivas explained her that he was too busy to write, she could only say, “You treated me as if I were dead and made me the laughing-stock of our entire village.” (32; ch 2). She was so bothered about the opinion of others than to think about her own miseries. Though her husband neglected his duty, she could easily forgive him and reconcile with him, Inspite of her husband’s total negligence it was she who like a true Indian wife came in search of her husband to live with him.

Mr. Sampath’s wife is another pathetic creature. Kitchen is her world. She felt so shy and fidgety when she was introduced to anyone. When Srinivas visited their house for the first time, she felt so shy even to appear before him. Mr. Sampath has to force her with the words.

What is the matter with you, behaving like an orthodox old crony of seventy-five dodging behind doors and going in to purdha. Come on come here there is no harm in showing yourself. (85; ch.4).

While she was introduced she was nervously wiping her hands with the end of her saree. When Srinivas was forced to have tiffin he felt uneasy and said that it would be a worry for his wife, Sampath said indifferently. “She has to do any case sir” (86; ch. 4). A traditional Indian wife has to entertain her husband’s
friends unquestioningly. Her feelings and conveniences were never taken into account. When Mr. Sampath had affair with a cine actress, she dare not question him directly. Even after so many years of married life she was not given the freedom to discuss anything with her husband. She was so scared that she sought the help of Srinivas’ wife. Under his wife’s compulsion Srinivas approached Mr. Sampath to discuss about the family matter.

Mr. Sampath a typical Indian, male chauvinistic husband, who never consulted anything with his wife and took things for granted very coolly justified his action with the words,

Some people say that every sane man needs two wives - a perfect one only for the house and a perfect one outside for social life… I have the one. Why not the other? I have confidence that I will keep both of them happy if necessary in separate houses… I have married according to the vedic rites. Let me have one according to the civil marriage law. (179; ch. 8).

What a chauvinistic justification! In a tradition-bound society like India, where women are considered inferior to men, it is no wonder that men like Mr. Sampath could give, such a daring explanation. Under the name of tradition when women keep their mouth shut against any exploitation even polygamy is
not a crime for an Indian male. Even the old Vedas and their religions come for their rescue. So, Sampath could proclaim without guilt that “I am doing nothing illegal to feel apologetic after all our religion permits us to marry many wives.” (180; ch. 8).

When Srinivas further insisted that he should think of his wife, Mr. Sampath loudly stated that, “Oh! These women will make scene she will be alright. She must get used to it.” (180; ch. 8). It is expected of an Indian wife to accept and adjust with her husband under any circumstances. She should not oppose even if her husband had an affair with another woman. So, Sampath very firmly believed that his wife would get used to the idea of sharing her husband with another lady.

When Srinivas pointed out that he had no right to cause any unhappiness to his wife and children, the loud hypocrite could declare with mock humility

Here goes my solemn declaration that my wife and children shall lack nothing in life, either in affection or comfort. Will this satisfy you? If I buy Shanti a car, my wife shall have another; If I give her a house, I will give the other also a house(180; ch. 8).
Women's illiteracy and their total dependence on the menfolk, made it convenient for the men like Mr. Sampath to lead a double life. The really affected party here is the housewife. Her feelings and reactions are just neglected or overlooked by her husband. Being a housewife it is firmly believed that she would adjust under any circumstances. Her likes and dislikes are never taken into account.

The first and foremost victim at the altar of power has been the woman. From the dawn of creation man has domineered over woman. The story of woman is an unbroken record of shame for man. The sight of woman should make every man blush. If every man is what he has made of himself every woman is what man has made of her. Her very thoughts run in the groove man has desired to direct them into. Man has never stopped to contemplate his handiwork, the woman, He has never thought of comparing the picture of what she might have been with the picture of what he has made of her. He has never cared to enquire how he has discharged the trust he took upon himself. The trust was taken voluntarily Before woman could make herself heard, before she could even think what was good for her, man rushed forward to take charge of her. Conscious of his power, led by its greed, man proceeded with the help of his sex, to make woman his eternal captive. From one end of the world to the other
without distinction of colour, creed, or civilization the male sex to a man combined to bring the woman down on her knees.

The history of woman written by obviously man reveals woman as a fragile being who needs the constant guidance of man. Man quotes chapters and verses he has written to perpetuate his tyranny over woman. Woman has treated man just as every mother forgives her naughty child and clasps it to her bosom again. With open arms woman always extended her welcome to man, her betrayer. The stamp of weakness she bears proclaim the place of life that is hers woman, a weak creature. Of all the slanders levelled against her, the greatest has been man’s misconception of the nature of woman. The meekness, the tenderness and the endurance of woman have been from the beginning, misconceived. She has silently wept in order that man, her child may not cease to smile; She has fortified herself with endurance, so that there may not appear a ripple over the happiness of man, her big child. The essence of womanhood lies in her motherhood. Over all her thoughts, all her feelings, peeps out her motherhood which is woven into her existence. Man is the eternal child of woman and she cannot but be forgiving and forbearing. In her life of constant sacrifice she too had a glimpse of higher life. With beaming eyes and yearning heart she revealed her wish to be a man. Through ages of degradations woman
had come to nourish the thought that her sex was barring her higher life and she decided to unsex herself.

3.5 MOTHERS IN R. K. NARAYAN'S NOVELS

Swami Vivekananda once pointed out to an audience the ideal womanhood in India. He praises, especially the motherhood in India that, in the West the women is wife. The ideal womanhood in India is motherhood – that marvellous, unselfish, all suffering, ever forgiving mother. The wife walks behind the shadow. In Indian tradition, the wife had a silent shadowy existence till she became a mother (of a son). To be a failure is to be a woman who cannot even bear a child. To be a success is to mother a child preferably a male child and through it achieve a sense of pleasure, pride and power. The mother in India has no name for she is more than a name, more than an individual person. She personifies a universal function. The Indian women aspires to be like Adite (the mother of Gods) or like a Lakshmi (The mother of all). Being a mother is more important than being a wife. Women in India is mainly the mother. She finds fulfillment in becoming the mother of son and is the creative, protective force in life and is so portrayed in literature. The mother in Indian tradition is the giver of blessings, the giver and protector of life. She is the creative and protective Goddess to be respected and worshipped.

The mother image shines like an unbroken ray in the whole of Indian culture and in Indo-Anglian literature. Dorothy Spencer who wonders whether
the image of sacrificing wife was real or idealised thinks that the sacrificing mother in Indo-Anglian fiction is intended as realistic portrayal. She quotes few lines from Bankim Chandra Chatterji’s ‘krishna kanta’s will ‘ to establish her point “Women is full of forgiveness, of compassion, of love. Women is the crowning excellence of God’s creation, the shadow of Gods.”

R.K. Narayan’s novels too reflect the traditional image of mother. Women’s role as a mother is more impressive than any other roles that a woman takes up in her life. Narayan’s world of Malgudi is filled with middle class families. In this world the mother is the channel to bring the erring children back to normalcy. As wife she tries to bring her husband to order, sanity and convention. As mother her function is to warn, wheedle, to cajole, to coax her children to the right path. She is a silent worker, a protective force but she is also a room of common sense and practical wisdom. As stated by Manu, “A master exceedeth ten tutors-in claim to honour; the father a hundred master; but the mother a thousand of fathers in right to reverence and in the function of teachers”

Kailas, the middle-aged alcoholic dabauch is only a minor character in ‘The Bachelor of Arts’ Still he becomes a memorable one thorough his love and affection for his mother. Chandran meets this man in Madras and gets a new experience of life in his brief contact. Kailas is a man with two wives, He comes
to Madras occasionally to have drinking and whoring to his heart's content.

Though he is an embodiment of all evil, his bouts of saturnalia are disturbed only because of the recollections of his mother and what he owes to her. His touching words,

> As long as my mother lived she said every minute
> ‘Do this, don’t do this’. And I remained a good son to her. The moment she died I changed. It is a rare commodity, Sir. Mother is a rare commodity.

(B.A. 99)

which are spoken with universal sensitivity is a real tribute to his dead mother.

It is only these affectionate and loving expression which made the drunken kailas, a memorable character in the novel. Kalas further comments that

> “Mother is a sacred object. It is a commodity whose value we don’t realise as long as it is with us. One must lose it to know what a precious possession it is. If I had mother I should have studied in a college and become a respectable person. You wouldn’t find me here” (98-99)
A mother is capable of transforming even such drunken rogues like Kailas into a saint.

Chandran’s mother is loving and considerate at the same time she is conservative and orthodox too. When Chandran revealed his one-sided love for Malathi, the girl whom he saw on the river bank, just to please him his mother earnestly wished to marry him to the girl of his choice. Though she was disappointed to know that Malathy was only a Head clerk’s daughter just to make Chandran happy she was ready to compromise.

When the marriage proposal failed, the heart broken Chandran left home and disappeared from Malgudi for nearly nine months. During his absence, his mother kept his room spotlessly clean and she never allowed anyone to enter the room. This reveals her motherly love and affection for her son. She even pestered his father everyday to inform the police. When Chandran questioned her why she took so much trouble, her reply was “what better business did I have?” (117) It is only her relentless (faultless) love for her son which made her very hopeful about his return. She was so sure that her son would come back to her soon and that made her live in his memory cleaning his room everyday and locking it up inorder to keep his younger brother out of his room.

In ‘The Dark Room’, though Savitri’s role as a wife dominates the scene, still her role as a mother plays a vital role in bringing back Savitri to her
traditional role. In this novel Narayan dramatises the psychological tragedy of a conventional wife whose redemption is achieved not through her husband's love but through the affirmation of her motherhood. During the Navaratri festival, when Babu's innocent plan to illuminate the doll-display unfortunately resulted in electric failure at home, the beast in Ramani came out and Babu was slapped severely several times. This heartless beating provokes the first spark of impotent anger in Savitri. She dashed forward to protect Babu. Faint with anger she burst out crying. When Ramani was gone, Savitri went to the dark room next to the store and threw herself on the floor.

It is significant that the novel opens with Savitri's concern for Babu's health. Snubbed by her haughty husband to mind her business in the kitchen, Savitri feels helpless. Babu goes to school and her thoughts again and again revert to her son. "The boy looked unwell, and perhaps at that moment was very ill in his class Babu did look very ill and she was powerless to keep him in bed." (16; ch 1) Most of savitri's quarrels with her husband and her sufferings are due to her love for her children. She sacrifices her happiness to protect her children from her hard-hearted husband.

Her husband's infidelity drove her out. She may leave home as a wife but haunted by the thoughts of her children she returns home defeated. Swallowing her pride she accepts her defeat just for the sake of her children. Mother's love is
priceless. Though a part of her is dead now, she is happy to be with her children. To her, the defeat, defiance and even the detestable dark room appeared trivial in the light of her motherly fulfillment. Thus the mother in R.K. Narayan's novels has unlike the father, hidden sources of power to remain silent, to suffer and protect her children, to rise to their defence if need arises. It is with the mother that the child feels safe. In 'The Dark room' Savitri intervenes between the father and the son when the son was beaten for no fault of his own. According to Swami Vivekananda, it is the father in India who thrashes the child and always the mother puts herself between the father and the child. It is Savitri's motherly love and awareness about the prevailing condition of the women of India, which makes her cautious about her daughter. Unwilling to make her daughters suffer in this male dominated world she determines to educate them and make them university graduates. She firmly hopes that the remedy lies only in education. Thus Savitri is portrayed as a loving, affectionate self-sacrificing, devoted and protective mother. Her life centres around her children and the soul purpose of her life is her children.

When the mother Comforts the children the father corrects them. Ramani in The Dark Room order his wife "Go and do any work you like in the kitchen, but leave the training of a grownup boy to me. It is none of a women's business" When the children are the soul responsibility of a women, correcting a
child becomes the soul responsibility of only the fathers. As said by Ranga, The cook, a women has no right to butt in when the father is dealing with his son. He calls it a bad habit.

Narayan shows a different type of parents in 'The Financial Expert'. Margayya the father of the three years old Balu pets his son and spoils him beyond remedy. But his wife is shown the opposite. It is she who reveals her husband of Balu's temper and mischievous nature and asks her husband to be strict with her son. But Marayayya never listened to her words and he scolded only her for her complaining nature. For all this he suffered later in his life. Marayayya's wife helplessly watched her son getting out of hands.

When there is perfect harmony between the husband and wife the child is a poem of joy as in 'The English Teacher'. Both krishnan and susila showed all their love and affection on their daughter Leela. Even when susila was down with typhoid she sat up to comb her child's hair. Even after her death her spirit hovers over the child protectively. In 'Swamy and Friends' also there is perfect harmony between the parents and so there is no trouble for Swami.

On the contrary if there is no harmony between husband and wife, children are load of pity and worry for the wife as in 'Mr.Sampath.' It is because the husband doesn't care for the wife or children. Mr.Sampath when
sought the company of the glamour doll, he forgot about his family completely and neglected his duty as a father and a husband. All the while his wife had to suffer silently with her children.

Raju’s mother in ‘The Guide’ is the source of his inspiration. Everyday she developed his skills through everlasting stories. Raju felt cosy and comfortable in her company. Everyday after dinner she sat at my side, awaiting father return. Her presence gave me a feeling of inexplicable (cosiness). I felt I ought to put her proximity to good use and complained, ‘something is bothering my hair’, and she ran her fingers through my hair and scratched the nape of my neck (T.G. 20; p.1)

After Rosie’s entrance in Raju’s life, his mother understood the situation clearly (predicament in which her son was placed) and was keen in sending her out. She appreciated Rosie’s courage and at the same time she was worried about the reaction of her relatives and others. Everyday she gave examples of numerous mythological stories to drive Rosie out of her home.

Apparently it was a general talk, apropos nothing but my mother’s motive were naively clear. She was so clumsily
round about that anyone could see what she was driving at. She was still supposed to be ignorant of Rosie’s affairs, but she talked pointedly. (155; ch. 7)

when all her attempts proved a failure including the arrival of her village brother, she brought out her trumpcard “If she is not going, I have to leave the house.” She picked up a few clothes here and there. Her large steel trunk which had never been moved from its place in a corner for decades and decades was packed and ready to be lifted out. Even when she was about to leave she asked him to be careful with his health. All this pictures her as a loving mother. She withstood all the suffering and humiliations just to save her son from the critical comments of her relatives and neighbours and from the clutches of a married woman.

The mother child relationship is all pervasive. It is in nature, it is in society and in the family. Mother is respected in all these spheres. At all levels the mother child bond is close and reciprocal. Thus R.K. Narayan has pictured the figure of mother in a realistic manner in his novels. His own mother Gnanambal proved a perfect example for Narayan. While his father R.V.Krishnaswamy Iyer, the headmaster of Maharaja collegiate High school,
was a disciplinarian at school and generally kept a distance from his sons (as was the practice of those days)

Gnanambal, Narayan's mother, brought to her marriage and family an abundance of robust common sense, sociability and broad, democratic and compassionate outlook. For many years, she was the hub around which the family revolved. Narayan would describe her as a very rare soul, plain dealing, transparent and absolutely committed to truth telling.

(Ram 10)

Thus Indian women turn towards motherhood with an overpowering zest. She is instrumental in bringing up her son and daughter too. As she lacks companionship, her husband having found no time for her, she turns her children for companionship and emotional fulfillment. Being a mother thus becomes synonymous with being a woman. Long nursing periods and holding her child in her arms not only foster a closeness and warmth between mother and child but also affirms mother's hold over the child. In her constant desire to nurture her children the mother is often seen in the kitchen feeding them, at the same time teaching them social etiquette and traditional values. As a mother she can be her real self sans the difference expected of her as a wife. Because of this...
semblance of power and freedom she achieves in the company of her children, she perceives the role of mother as more important than that of a wife.

3.6 GRANDMOTHERS IN R.K.NARAYAN’S NOVELS

The most outstanding character in the joint family in R.K. Narayan’s Malgudi world is the grand mother, drawn perhaps from his own life. “She was the tree, she was the soil, she was the earth” (Desai.111) These metaphors that Anita Desai uses for Mira Masi (Aunt Mira) in ‘Clear light of Day’ bring to our mind images of the grandmother or her surrogate, in Indian family as provider, protector, nurturer, life-giver and sustainer and endurer. What distinguishes her from the mother more than anything else, are her age and experience. These gives her a sense of power and authority. She has passed the stage where her role as wife could intrude on her maternal functions.

She stands as a symbol of stability and dependability. Though she may not support the family economically, she shades the grandchildren from evil and parental wrath. She gives them all of herself. She also infuses in them a sense of their own selves and that of a family. Along with these, she passes on tradition and culture for she is tradition and a custodian of culture. It is evident that she too is dependent on her grandchildren. She and the grandchildren are two axes; without either of the axes, it is impossible to draw the graph of life.
Grandmother is an imposing, protective and benevolent figure at home. She holds together the members of the family by the maternal love which she showers on them. Though she sits in a corner, she sees that all things go on smoothly that young are kept away from mischief, that servants work and all is safe. Her tender heart, her religious nature, her wisdom and her experience make her an indispensable person. Her stories and her abilities to mix with children draw the little ones around her while their mother works in the kitchen. She makes the children feel that they are wanted doubly and are protected. She is the symbol of fast disappearing old order, the central binding force in the joint family. The image of grand mother and her relationship with her children and grand children are shown in various lights by R.K. Narayan in few of his novels. It was granny who was the deepest influence on his life. William Walsh affirms that "She is clearly the original of those robust, dry and temperamental old ladies who flourish in Narayan's fiction" (10)

In swami and friends it may appear that the grandmother and grandson are indifferent to or at odds with each other for throughout the day it appears that swami is running out to play and does not care for his grandmother, while she is fated to sit in the dimly lit hall passage, an unobtrusive place from where she can see everything. But at night, when the lights are lit it is to her, to whom he can
boast about the exploits of the day he returns. After the night meal with his head on his granny's lap nestling close to her he feels very snug and safe. She is steeped in the religious tradition and mythological love. Swami's knowledge of mythology is her own imparting.

In an Indian joint family granny and her repertory puranic and legendary stories is a common thing. Narayan's skilful variation of this various facts are worth noting. There is a touch of Tagore in his handling of grandmother and her stories. With the father the boy feels awkward and afraid, and the mother has no time to listen to his constant and long talk, there is house work and the baby. Only granny can hear about all his talk about Rajam, the new school friend and about cricket, she too wants to speak about the golden days when his grandfather was alive. Both try to push their own stories, both speak at cross-purposes, both want to speak and not to listen.

Narayan however avoids giving a one dimensional aspect. The protecting person herself is at times a pitiable figure needing protection. She cannot speak or see or hear clearly due to old age. She has no money to give her grandson to buy a hoop he longs for and tears come to her eyes at this thought. At times Swami also neglects her and does not buy the lemon, she needs for her stomach ache and he runs out to play. But the boys' deep attachment returns at the end of the game and he feels sorry for neglecting her. As soon as he reached home he
asked consciously if she got the lemon. "Granny answered this question at once, but to Swaminathan it seemed an age a terrible stretch of time during which anything might happen. She might say anything, scold him, disown him, swear that she would have nothing more to do with him or say reproachfully that if only he had cared to go and purchase the lemon in time, he might have saved her and that she was going to die in a few minutes." (S.F. 127 Ch XIV). It is after all an unseen bond that binds grandmother and grandson and granny knows what the boys feels for her inspite of all his naughtiness and negligence. The old helpless woman rises up when it is a question of defending the boy. Then she grows in stature from a pitiable figure to a protective one.

This undercurrent of affection between a grand mother and her grand child is so deep that many a time it runs against the authority of the male in the family who may be her own son and a firm disciplinarian. Her grownup son cannot assert him and is on the side of her little grandson. Swami is very sure that if he went too far, granny and mother could always be depended upon to come to his rescue.

When swami disappeared suddenly one day the old lady left her bed and hobbled agitatedly about the house, prayed to the God of Thirupathi Hills, promising him rich offers if he restored Swaminathan to her safe and sound the old lady was so restless and unhappy till she restored her grandson.
Even in ‘The English Teacher’ the grandmother plays a vital role. It is only her comforting words and stories which made the motherless child Leela, feel a sense of belonging. After the sudden demise of his wife Susila, Krishnan the English teacher becomes so vexed in life. Though he slipped in to his double role with great expertness and played both father and mother to her, only his mother’s company made Leela happy. Grandmother took charge of Leela completely. She, with her maternal love and affection, made the little girl forget about her mother totally. She was thoughtful enough to buy rich and useful gifts like gold chain for her grand daughter Leela. She never allowed her son to treat harshly. “Don’t be harsh, poor child .... You used to be exactly the same : you’d cling to your father and wouldn’t let him remove even his sandals before giving you your presents “ (213;ch:4).

Under the care of grandmother the child bloomed with a new life. Under her handling she ceased to approach her father for company or help. She stuck to her grandmother morning to night and slept with her in her bed. She bloomed in this warmth.

After four weeks stay, when grandmother left, Leela adamantly clung to her. Though her father was reluctant to send her, her bobbling enthusiasm made
Krishnan unwillingly agree to this proposal. Grandmother was to willing to take Leela along with her to her place.

Even in Waiting for Mahatma, the grandmother plays an important role. Sriram, the hero was brought up by his grandmother she is his old guardian and upbringer. She not only takes care of his money but also himself with great care, love and affection. On his twentieth birthday she feels happy and relieved to handover her responsibility to Sriram. She has been depositing religiously the military pension of her dead son and the deposits have accumulated over the year to a figure of over thirty eight thousand rupees. Sriram’s association with Bharathi, only irritates her. As his true guardian she pleads him to leave the entire affair and become normal. The very mention of Gandhism irritates and frightens her. She could not endure her long separation from her grandson and fell ill seriously. Her attachment for Sriram in so great that she escapes even death and comes out of the funeral pyre feeling the presence of her grandson. When she finally recovers Sriram is whisked away by the police. At last unable to withstand her lonely existence she leaves for Banares to pass her remaining days on the Ghats of Ganges.

Grandmother makes her entry again in ‘The World of Nagaraj’. Though she proves a critical mother-in-law even in her old age, the arrival of her grandson Tim changes her attitude completely. She is all soft and tender infront
of her grandson. Just watching him reading books makes her feel happy and proud. Even Tim who is otherwise a quarrelsome, tough youth was fond of his grand mother. He derived pleasure chatting with the old lady every now and then. He never minded her constant movement over the whole place and nagging questions. But the poor old lady did not live long enough to enjoy her grandson’s company.

Thus the image of grandmother is a recurring image in the novels of Narayan. She plays a complex role and has varied attitudes. Narayan himself is aware of the uniqueness and the importance of the grandmother in Indian families. Narayan’s first fifteen years were spent under the supervision of a distinguished grandmother, Ammani, in Madras while the rest of his family lived in princely Mysore. As rightly stated by N. Ram in the cover story of frontline this childhood period.

….. Stands out for the unusual quality of the beginning of a writer. The link between the quality of childhood and adult creativity is now well-recognized. Narayan’s was a wonderfilled childhood ‘anchored in a capacious, sociable enlightened middle class home environment in an ancient socially mixed but changing quarter of great city. It was an
upbringing under somewhat straitened economic circumstances. (Ram. 9)

Thus the older woman has played an important role. When the child was separated from mother, it was the old woman, the grand mother surrogate, who took care of it, taught it above all, techniques of survival. The grandmother in the words of Anila Desai is "Constant as a staff, a tree that can be counted on not to pull its roots and shift in the night". (110) Thus the Emancipation did not obliterate the pivotal function of the older woman.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Thus the evolution of traditional women, in an Indian society with all its merits and demerits is very beautifully and realistically drawn by R.K. Narayan in his novels. The female characters discussed in this chapter have clearly depicted the problems faced by the traditional Indian women at various phases of their life.

Man simply dotes upon the weakness of woman. Woman should ever remain weak that he may continue to take pride in being her protector. The idea of a strong woman is paradoxical and appears amusing to him. Man expected her to remain eternally weak to remain ever charming in the eyes of valiant man. He cannot bear to make woman her equal. He cannot bear to have an eternal rival by his side. Two cannot rule. Woman should therefore go to the wall. Her
conception of wisdom and strength should remain confined to her admiration of the wisdom and strength displayed by man.

Man dare not deny the charge that may be brought against him by woman. No one has yet been able to endanger the liberty of another without endangering him own. She may be his sister with whom he has spent many a precious year of life, but she is only a woman. She may be his wife, who shared his sorrows and trials and stifled her feelings he be deprived of the inspiration of her beaming countenance, but she is after all woman. No one has yet been able to endanger the liberty of another without endangering his own. Woman’s loss has been man’s loss. Woman’s degradation has been man’s degradation.

The Indian women under the name of tradition and culture have to undergo a lot of difficulties right from their childhood. In his novels R.K. Narayan has very clearly pictured the domestic, social, economical and psychological problems of the traditional Indian women. Though the basic reason for their sufferings is tradition, from the above analysis it is proved that it is also their illiteracy which makes them a household slave. It can be concluded that by educating the women, they can be made courageous, independent and self confident. Education will definitely liberate them from all their shackles. It will also instill in them the positive qualities such as self confidence, courage, individual thinking, problem solving ability and decision making power.
whole it can be said that the salvation of Indian women lies in their education and economic independence.