CHAPTER - IV
TRANSITIONAL WOMEN

4.1 GENERAL

The third chapter deals with the women of the transitional period. These women were a fine mixture of tradition and modernity. They cannot be classified either as traditionals or as moderns. In the beginning of the novel they appear traditional in nature, as the story progresses due to various reasons they transform gradually into moderns. After the transformation also they find no satisfaction or fulfillment or peace in their life. Often disturbed by the traditional values, they become guilty conscious about their transformation and finally once again they return to tradition. The two opposite poles finally find a meeting place but they cannot stay together for a long time and once again they fall apart and become a separate entity. The best examples of this type are found in R.K. Narayan's "The Dark Room", "The Guide" and "Talkative Man". The heroines of these novels Savitri, Rosie and Roja are first introduced as traditional wives. Later the circumstances and their new-found awareness force them to forgo their traditional role and adapt themselves to the changing modern trends. Towards the end all the three novels the heroines limb back to their original role.
4.2 SAVITRI IN THE DARK ROOM

First comes the character of Savitri. This character has already been analysed in the first chapter. As stated in the first chapter, there are two phases in Savitri's life. The first phase which poses Savitri as a traditional wife is followed by the second phase where she is shown as a rebel with her awakened self. With the entrance of Shantabai in her life, the little sparks of rebellion in Savitri burst out at last. She can withstand an imperious, tyrant-like husband but not an unfaithful one. When she learnt that her husband is no longer faithful to her, the rebel in her wakes up and she explodes. Her conventional faith and belief is shattered and she behaves in a strikingly unconventional way. She decides to renounce her marriage and leaves her home. This leads to the violation of Manu-code, which stresses that a Hindu woman should not reject her husband in any circumstances. It says, "Though destitute of virtue or seeking pleasure (else where) or devoid of good qualities (yet) a husband must be constantly worshipped as a God by a faithful wife" (Manu 195)

Though she withstood all the eccentricities of her husband like a traditional Hindu wife, she bursts out violently. The stifled emotion and pent up resentment at last find an outlet when she cries in unbearable agony and anger.
I am a human being... you men will never grant that.
For you we are play things when you feel like hugging and slaves at other times. Don't you think, you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose! (DR110; ch.6)

Savitri resembles Ibsen's Nora Helmer in this situation. The vigorous and violent outburst of Savitri reveals the remarkable transformation in her. She quits her husband and home. His infidelity brings out to the surface the elements of rebelliousness that had been dormant in her until then. This is obvious from her loud proclamation of her "non entity" just before her exit. "What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's or her son's." (113; ch.6)

She would rather starve and die in the open than to accept any thing from men. She is very firm that she should not be under the obligation of any men. So she remarks,

Do you think that I am going to stay in your house, breathe the air of your property, drink the water here and eat food you buy with your money? No, I'll
Savitri should really be appreciated for her bravery. No other woman would have brought out her hatred towards male chauvinism and the entire male race so vividly like Savitri. Her angry outburst reveals the helplessness of every Indian woman towards the Supremacy of men. Her refusal to take even the jewels given by her father proclaims her uncontrollable anger towards the other sex. “Take them away they are also a man’s gift.” (113; ch.6). She removed all her jewels and threw it at her husband’s feet. But even at that situation, she could not give up her children. When she went near the children she was halted by the words of her husband “Don’t touch them or talk to them. Go yourself, if you want. They are my children.” (113; ch.6) She was shocked but composed herself quickly by accepting her ‘non entity’.

yes, you are right, they are yours absolutely. You paid the mid wife and the nurse. You pay for their clothes and teachers. You are right. Didn’t I say that a woman owns nothing. (113; ch.6)

With these fiery words she walks out of her traditional role. Though she was disturbed by the thought of her children, her husband’s indifference to her anger,
"I am very sleepy. I am waiting to bolt the street door and go to bed; that is if you decide to go out " (114; ch.6) drove her out of her traditional role at midnight. Judging from the time when the novel was written, that is the pre independence era, it can be said that her words were a jolt not only to her husband but also to every Indian male. Her words were too violent and vigorous to be spoken by a woman with deep rooted traditional conviction. Her action takes Ramani off guard and gives him the shock of his life. He exclaims “ She had always been docile and obedient and the fire inside her was a revelation to him now.”(139; ch.9)

She was expected only to sulk in the dark for few days and come to her senses as usual. He expected her to plead or coax him as usual to get things done. Her authoritative dictation shatters his ego. Though he pretended to be indifferent in front her, he had the shock of his life. Her angry outburst and her unconventional behavior shocks not only her husband but also herself. While reminiscing over the incident she says

Am I the same old Savitri or am I some one else?
Perhaps this is just a dream. And I must be some one else posing as Savitri because I couldnot have had the courage to talk back to my husband. (118; ch.7)
She is amazed at her own reaction, though she made a bold exit, she is disturbed by the thought of the outside world. She is haunted by unwanted fears and she hated herself for it.

Afraid of one’s father, teachers and everybody in early life, afraid of one’s husband, children and neighbours in later life. Fear, Fear in one’s heart till the funeral pyre was lit. (119; ch.7)

Fear of existence haunt her and she was perplexed. Sitting near the river bank she could find no solution. Her inability to earn her livelihood except begging drives her mad and she decides to take her life herself by drowning. “No one who could not live by herself should be allowed to exist.” It is only at that moment she realizes the importance of women’s education. She understands the similarity between a wife and a prostitute and she decides to educate her daughters.

What is the difference between a prostitute and a married woman? The prostitute changes her men, but a married woman doesn’t that’s all, but both earn their food and shelter in the same manner. Yes, Kamala
and Sumati must take their university course and become independent. (120; ch.7)

This thought-provoking comparison highlights the pitiable state of the uneducated, married Indian housewives. Savitri’s firm determination to die rather than to accept anything from others brings out her passion for freedom. She prefers to end her life drowning than to depend on anyone for her existence. But she was saved by a lock-repairer and was taken to his house. She accompanied him with a condition. “I will come with you, she said, on condition that you don’t trouble me to come under roof or any other roof. I will remain only under the sky.” (138; ch.8)

His wife, Ponni was too willing to help Savitri. She was very hospitable also. But Savitri refuses to accept any charity. But Ponni with her tactfulness, persuaded Savitri to enter her house. But all her coaxing, loving and polite words could not make Savitri accept her food. Savitri was firm about her resolution. She says “I am resolved never to accept food or shelter which I have not earned.” (157; ch.10) Eating food that was her own had grown into perfect obsession in her mind. So, when she was given rice for her work, she was so exhilarated. “This is my own rice, my very own; and I am not obliged to anyone for this. This is nobody’s charity to me.” (184; Ch.10) She was thrilled and triumphant over her victory. A new kind of peace descended on her at the
thought of her freedom but it was only a temporary relief. Though her occupation provided her with basic material needs and made her economically independent, it failed to provide her inner security and total peace of mind. When she was alone in the temple, everything terrified her. She was furious with herself. She says with contempt and self pity. “What despicable creations of God are we that we cannot exist without a support. I am like a bamboo pole which cannot stand without a wall to support it…” (189; ch.10)

She also felt home sick. A nostalgia for children, home and accustomed comforts seized her. She couldn’t help contrasting the comfort, security and loneliness of her home. The image of her children drew her towards her home. Her futility, frustration and inescapable weakness forced her to accept her defeat. “This is my defeat. I accept it. I am no good for this fight. I am a bamboo pole…” (190; ch.10)

The thought of her uncared for children drove her back home. Though the novel ends where it begins this does not mean that Savitri, herself has remained unchanged. Success lies in her failure. She has learnt to control her senses. She has come back not as an eager wife but as a loving mother. She does not have any more expectations as an eager wife. She has killed her desires and ego for the sake of her children and especially her daughters. She does not want them to suffer in the chauvinistic society like herself. Her aim now is to educate her
daughters for their independent future. "...Yes, Sumathi and Kamala must take their University course and become independent." (120; ch.7)

A part of her is dead now. But the awakened Savitri is more courageous, independent and contented. Though she accepts her defeat and limps back home, hers is a daring attempt to be made in tradition bound male society like India. She is a very good example of women of the transitional period. They are a fine mixture of tradition and modernity. Though they revolt against tradition still they compromise with it to have a peaceful and respectful life.

In the pre-independence era, Indian women accepted their shadowy existence and inferior position in the family unquestioningly. As Meena Shirwadkar rightly said,

She had been a creature trampled through the centuries, living a silently suffering, sacrificing, shadowy supine existence... She had neither the desire not the strength to revolt. (Shirwadkar 145)

The freedom struggle helped them to emerge out of their dark room and fight in the open along with the men for their nation. Slowly they understood the value of independence and equality. So they started their fight against their own men folk who considered them their inferior. After their self-awareness they
could no longer confine themselves to the narrow walls of their household. The injustices inflicted on them made them more and more rebellious and independent. So they started showing their repulsion towards tradition, which is the root cause of all their sufferings. In the beginning it was a tough fight. They cannot easily throw their traditional roles and become outright modern as women of the modern age. They oscillated between tradition and modernity not knowing the right choice. Though they rebelled bravely, the circumstances forced them to accept their traditional role. Finally the transitional women, either willingly or unwillingly have to give up their fight and accept their traditional role.

4.3 ROSIE IN THE GUIDE

Rosie in R.K. Narayan's 'The Guide' is a perfect example of transitional woman. The mental conflicts of a woman of transitional period are easily pictured by R.K. Narayan in this novel. Through Rosie R.K. Narayan has broken all the complaints of his chauvinistic Indianness. As O.P. Mathur rightly puts it

...Narayan gives us the feel of life itself, which is neither all white nor all black but the gray twilight world of contemporary life quivering hesitatingly between tradition and modernity. (Mathur 71)
The women of R.K. Narayan are no longer passive and trembling figures. They are active and brave women for whom life seems to open with all the possibilities. We can notice R.K. Narayan "...gracefully and naturally employing the medium of modernity." (Philip 126) As in "The Dark room" in this novel also Narayan deals with marriage in disharmony. But the marriage breaks in 'The Guide' not due to the infidelity of the husband as in 'The Dark room' but due to the wife's infidelity. Rosie resembles Shantabai in her manipulation of sex to achieve her ends. But the relationship is not soiled by materialism alone, it out shines the other with its divine sparks of love and mutual understanding.

Rosie the graceful dancer is not an illiterate like Savitri but highly educated. She is a Post-graduate in Economics. She is educated to hold respect and honour in the society. She belongs to a devadasi family. Woman of this family were not considered respectable and civilized. They were treated as public women. Her mother gives her education, to use that as a trump card to obtain their family's lost honour and respect. Rosie, differs from Savitri and Daisy in this aspect. While the other two belonged to a strict orthodox Hindu family, she belongs to an unorthodox devadasi family. This makes her life all the more miserable. She marries Marco, a rich and eligible bachelor at the cost of her art. All the woman in the family
...were impressed, excited that a man like him was coming to marry one of our class and it was decided that if it was necessary to give up our traditional art, it was worth the sacrifice. (TG 85; Ch.5)

Marco, though professionally is engaged in ancient Indian art, his ways and tastes are more modern than traditional. The method he adopted to choose his bride itself is very modern. He marries the daughter of a davadasi only on the basis of her response to his matrimonial advertisement and the main reasons for selecting her are her graceful look and M.A. Degree. Probably he married her out of his desire to have someone to care for his practical life. His appreciation of Joseph reveals what he expected of his wife “That Joseph is a wonderful man, I don’t see him, I don’t hear him, he does everything for me at the right time. That’s how I want things to be, you know.” (127; ch.7)

But his choice proves wrong as Rosie, herself a dreamer, could not forget her profession. She needs a husband, who would care for her career as a dancer. But what she actually got was an indifferent and feelingless husband. Only Dead and decaying things seemed to unloosen his tongue and fire his imagination, rather than things that lives, moved and swung their limbs.” (81; ch.5). Marco prefers dead art to a living exponent of art. Though Marco had everything that a
girl could dream of, a big house, a motor car, high social status, he could not make his wife, who was full of life and bubbling energy, happy.

Rosie, the passionate dancer is married to this ruthless antiquarian for the sake of respectable, peaceful and comfortable life, which is beyond the reach of the girls of her caste. Her wall-gazing husband does not give her any love, thought and consideration. He expects her to be a perfect housewife, silently fulfilling his needs, not expecting anything in return. Though he selected her as his wife in a daringly modern way, his expectations reveal him as a typical Indian dominating male. He lacked even the basic humane consideration. All that he expected of his marriage is an obedient slave and not his equal partner.

Rosie’s tragedy is Marco’s lack of appreciation of her art. She studies the king cobra for her snake dance, she practices dancing everyday when Marco is not around. She lives and breaths and talks non-stop about dancing. The greatest tragedy in Rosie’s life is Marco’s inhuman attitude to dance. While she is an embodiment of dance itself, Marco considers it as a street acrobatics. To him it is only a monkey-like imitation. The very word ‘dance’ always stung him. One fine day when Rosie revealed her desire to become a dancer he insulted her with his remarks
I am not prepared to discuss all that with you. An acrobat on a trapeze goes on doing the same thing all his life; well. Your dance is like that. What is there intelligent or reactive in it? You repeat your tricks all your life. We watch a monkey perform, not because it is artistic but because it is a monkey that is doing it.

(148; ch.7)

Such a ruthless and insulting remark pushed her straight into the awaiting arms of Raju, the tourist guide, who accompanied them to all the places. Raju manipulates her through her love for dancing. “I found out the clue to her affection and utilised it to the utmost.” (122; ch 7) Though she married Marco at the cost of her dance, when faced with reality, life without dance was too bitter for Rosie. Marco’s icy-cold approach to life added fuel to her yearning. Raju, who fell in love with Rosie at the very first sight, slowly captured the mind and heart of Rosie. Blinded by his flattering words, she succumbs herself to the momentary pleasure but she repents for her mistake later. Though she is bold enough to have a lover, she is not courageous enough to give up her husband. She even justifies her husband’s indifference and feels sorry for him. “As a good man he may not mind but is it not a wife’s duty to guard and help her husband what ever the way in which he deals with her?” (120; ch.7)
Still she falls for Raju, only after she realized that Marco has crushed her to the core. Marco's indifference towards her art confirms her that "Her art and her husband could not find a place in her thoughts at the same time; one drove the other out." (122; ch.7)

We can find the echo of Daisy here. Daisy in "The Painter of Signs" also throws away her marriage for the sake of her profession with the words. "Married life is not for me. I have thought it over. It frightens me. I am not cut out for the life you imagine. I can't live except alone," (PS 179: ph.4)

Rosie also decides to risk her marriage. But she cannot come out of it with a clear mind. Her conscience pricks her very often. She tries every method to get her husband back. But Marco is not only cool and calculative but also arrogant and heartless. When he learns about her infidelity he rejects her with the words "...You are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone that flatters your antics. That's all," (152; ch.7) He gets a single ticket back to Madras and throws her out unceremoniously. This puts an end to all her humiliations and sufferings. This merciless, cruel treatment of a husband would have driven any other woman to suicide but Rosie shows extreme boldness and shrewdness by taking Raju in her husband's place.
She is shrewd enough to judge the situation that only with Raju she could attain what she aspired for. She is also bold enough to face the society with her unconventional decision. She is no longer a delicate and graceful object of beauty. She is out in the field to fight for her cause. Though she does not really care for Raju, she came to him as he was the only person who understood her feelings and cared for her dance. Even while living with him she showed complete indifference to his family affairs. While Raju considered her as his family member and discussed the domestic affairs openly with his mother in her presence, She kept aloof and indifferent. When family conversation went on,

She looked fixedly at the floor or at the pages of a book and moved off to a corner of the hall, as if to be out of earshot. She did not even, when she was alone with me embarrass me by asking any questions about our affairs. (155; ch .7)

But Raju’s mother was worried about her presence. Being a devoted, traditional Indian wife, she tried to change Rosie’s mind, with her mythical stories of the devoted wives. Whenever she spoke to Rosie, she filled the time with anecdotes about husbands;
...Good husbands, mad husbands, reasonable husbands, unreasonable ones, savage ones, slightly deranged ones, moody ones and so an and so forth, but it was always the wife, by her doggedness, perseverance and patience that brought him round.

(155; ch.7)

But nothing could alter Rosie’s mind. She was quite happy about the present and looked forward eagerly for the future. Even the fearful presence of Raju’s village uncle could not disturb her. As advised by Raju she shut her ears to all the abuses showered on her by his mother and uncle. Perhaps what gave her the necessary courage and strength was her desire to become a great dancer. Nothing could keep her away from her goal. Neither the cajoling words of Raju’s mother nor the terrible threats of his village uncle could hinder her success.

Everything in this universe has its price. The price of her art is her married life. She was so obsessed with her art that nothing could deter her from her goal. Inspite of all her sufferings both mental and economical, as a dedicated, devoted artist she practiced meticulously and gained the required skill in her art. With Raju’s help she becomes popular over night. The college union function was her grand beginning. She sored up like a rocket and her name
became a public property. This rapid progress made Raju understand the fact that "even Marco could not have suppressed her permanently; some time she was bound to break out and make her way." (182; ch.9)

This is the case of many of the emerging women. Not knowing their own worth many a women like Rosie live in fetters for a long time. Once their hidden talent is leashed, there is no obstacle for their progress. Rosie, as long as she was a dedicated and devoted wife, she could not think of her art, once she found an out let in Raju, she sored up. Nothing could deter her from her success. She earned fame, name and money.

But her pleasure was only short living. With new found money Raju became business like and he started interfering in all her activities. He planned everything for Rosie and he ran the life for her like a husband. Though they were not married Raju became very possessive and opposed her to have even a free talk with other artists, on the basis of their superiority. Annoyed by his constant vigil over her every activity she bursts out with anger "why should you come and pull me out of company? Am I a baby?" (193; ch.9)

Once again Rosie loses her identity and slaves for a man. When her life becomes more mechanical with endless programmes, she loses all her interest in her art. More than everything she likes only the garlands given in honour of her
art. She accepts it with the words "To me this is the only worth while part of my own whole activity." (194; ch.9) Her disapproval of Raju’s luxurious way of living shows her interest in simple living. Her self-confidence and endurance are so great that Raju used it as a tool to change her mood. Whenever she felt irritated or depressed he challenged her ability and made her accept the programmes with zest.

You are not saying that your legs are aching, are you?

It had the desired effect. It pricked her pride she said.

‘Certainly not. I can dance for several hours at each show.’ (195; ch.9)

But her pleasure is only momentary. When Raju starts commercializing her art, once again she feels unhappy and defeated. Life becomes dull and monotonous. She feels like “…the bulls yoked to an oil-crusher they keep going round and round and round in a circle, without a beginning or an end.” (202; ch.9) She compares herself to “One of those parrots in a cage taken around village fairs or a performing monkey…. ” (203; ch.9)

With all her popularity and money she could not find real solace. Her simple desire was a normal life. She wanted to live amidst other artists without any restrictions.
How I wish I could go into a crowd walk about, take a seat in the auditorium, and start out for an evening without having to make up or dress for the stage.

(194; ch.9)

She resents being treated like a commodity and regrets the commercialisation of her art. She even refuses to dance in public hating the circus existence. She feels disappointed that her visualisation was completely shattered.

Even in the midst of her mechanical life, every now and then she is reminded of her husband. Inspite of all his indifference and insults she always has a soft corner for him. Her deep rooted tradition made her feel justified about his indifference. Paul Verghese calls Rosie a typical Indian heroine. She is Indian in the sense despite her dedication to her art, she is conditioned by Dharma or duty appropriate to one’s role in the life and Karma, the severe concept of determinism. Expected to conform to the conventional feminine model, she develop an ambivalent attitude towards self-assertion. She feels guilty and remorse about breaking up her marriage. She has womanly pity for Marco too. She feels that he too has suffered in his own way. She cuts out his photograph from the illustrated Magazine and places it on her dressing table. She sits up at night, troubled at the turn of events, worried about her conduct
towards him. She likes to hear about him. The news about his book sends her to raptures and she even admits that her husband's activities are bound to interest her. In this aspect she is worse than Savitri. When Savitri could completely ignore things about her husband in the end, Rosie always had high regards and admiration for him. She is even ready to forget everything with the words "After all, after all, he is my husband." (201; Ch.9)

The fact that he is her husband gives him all the rights to insult and enslave his wife. Rosie, also with all her striking modernism, is willing to compromise like a true Indian wife. This is the pitiable stage of the transitional women. They feel dishonored soiled and disillusioned without their husbands. They are ready to forget and forgive everything to get their husbands back. Though they have modern and rebellious ideas, they cannot forego tradition completely. They are tossed between the two and fail to drive satisfaction and peace from either of the two. They are so mentally disturbed that they always feel guilty and restless.

Rosie's emergence as a real modern, independent and self-willed woman happens after the arrest of Raju. When Rosie showed extreme consideration for her husband, Raju was afraid that he might lose her. Out of his fear of losing Rosie, Raju, forges her signature to get back her Jewel box from Marco. But this proves a fatal step in his life. His kingdom collapses in no time and he was
arrested. Once again she is out in the open to fight against her life all alone. She faces the situation marvelously. She makes Raju feel like a stranger in the house. He finds it difficult even to look at her face. Raju’s callousness was a great shock to Rosie. But after the initial shock, she becomes hardened. At first, not having the courage to face reality, two different ideas flashed on her mind. She thought of returning to her husband leaving her art or to end her life. But with little brooding she realized her foolishness and fought back her will power and confidence to face the reality.

Though she did not want to face her audience after the bitter incident, she decided to dance to show her gratitude. She feels it her responsibility to save Raju. But her bitter experiences with two different men has opened her eyes to reality. It is only now that she understands clearly about men and decides to move away from all men once her task is over. She warns firmly

“If it does not mean I am not going to help. If I have to pawn my last possession, I’ll do it to save you from jail. But once it’s over leave me once and for all; that’s all I ask. Forget me, Leave me to live or die, as I choose; that’s all.”(201-202; ch.9)
Her frank and bold speech is the out cry of every suffering Indian woman, who is burdened by the clutches of tradition and custom. She sold all her jewellery and gathered all the cash she could. She became very practical and saved every penny. People were willing to assist her. Her self-reliance made Raju envious. In spite of her early protests she continued dancing. Her love for art was so much that she could not control herself. Raju was sure that “...in spite of her protestation she would never stop dancing. She would not be able to stop.” (222; ch.10)

A sudden activity seized her. She arranged for a big lawyer from Madras. She worked harder than ever to keep the lawyer as well as the house going. But, nothing could save Raju, who was sentenced to two years imprisonment. Once everything was over, she settled all the debts and moved off to Madras to have a free and lone life. Even her last meeting with her husband shows her new outlook towards life. Earlier she was willing to forego her art to join her husband. But the bitter experiences has taught her to be indifferent to men. She has understood the fact that she did not need the help or the support of any men in her life. She finally settles down for a more interesting and meaningful life of her own. Only then does Raju discover her real strength and ability. Now he is assured that “... even Marro could not have suppressed her permanently.” (182; ch.9)
Her remarkable self confidence, self-reliance and extra ordinary will power made him jealous of her growth. He acknowledges that

I know, looking at the way she was going about her business, that she would manage whether I was inside the bars or outside whether her husband approved of it or not (222; ch.10)

The life which she led so far was only an illusion. She had enough courage and strength which was hidden first by her husband and later by her lover. This unleashed vitality found an outlet at the critical moment. She managed heroically, when her life was in question. When Raju came to know about her success, from the news paper he fumed with envy. “Her empire was expanding rather than shrinking. It filled me with gall that she should Go an without me.” (229; ch.10)

Her empire extended far and wide. She travelled all over the world all by herself. It was made clear to Raju that nothing or no one in the world could have stopped Rosie’s progress. Raju could understand clearly that “Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life, which had its own sustaining vitality and which she herself had underestimated all along” (223; ch.10)
There lines very neatly sums up the inane modern outlook and successful independent existence of Rosie. This also reveals the cause of the sufferings of so many Indian women. They do not know their own ability, strength and endurance. Being brought up in a sheltered and conducive atmosphere they think that they need a support throughout their life. The fault lies in themselves. They lack self confidence and feel happy to live in a make belief world of their own. They always expect a knight in shining armour to appear for their rescue. Only when the need arises faced with the reality of life, they learn their lesson and become shrewd and independent.

By taking up a specific career decisively, Rosie liberates herself from the twisted vision that cultural conditioning had imposed on her. The emergence of the resilient Rosie means the disappearance of the good things associated with the old definition of the female: the tenderness, the caring, the emphasis on personal relationships, courtesy and decorum. Her first and last love is her dancing. She pushes her feelings and prejudices to the background and concentrate on her art. She cases to be quivering jelly of emotions that society had accustomed to. It is to be regretted that the woman no longer forms part of a mutual imagination in wedded life. There is no harmony or music in marriage. Every relationship is a contest for possession.
4.4 ROJA IN TALKATIVE MAN

Another example of the transitional woman is Roja alias Sarasa, the woman commandant of ‘Talkative Man.’ Unlike the other two characters Savitri and Rosie, she is not the heroine of the novel. She is only a minor character in the novel and the story does not centre around her. She makes her appearance only in very few places. But still she towers above even the men, characters with her manly appearance and menacing manners. Narayan describes her as “… a six-foot woman, dark complexioned, cropped head, and in jeans and a T. Shirt with bulging breasts, the first of her kind in Malgudi area” (TM 49; ch.12)

With her gigantic appearance and commanding words she made all the men characters insignificant in front of her. The very same stationmaster, who necked her husband out of the waiting room using all his authority, tried to shrink out of her sight, simpered and stayed in the background. The porter accepted her words mutely. Even the talkative man felt meek and helpless. He was afraid to utter anything because she was so uninhabited and loose-tongued. He felt “… as though I’d have to surrender my title of ‘Talkative Man’ and take a second place in the world of talkers.” (68; ch.15)
She is a perfect example of a modern woman. She is bold, rebellious, educated, employed, independent and shrewd. She knew how to handle people. She is very tactful and practical minded. The station master was too willing to accommodate her in the waiting room. She bribed the station master and the porter generously so that her stay would be comfortable in the waiting room. She accepts

I gave them five rupees and he has been so helpful—
even got a spray pump and eliminated the bugs almost fifty percent! Now it is tolerable. He has also arranged to sent me food from his house....

(65; ch. 15)

With all her modern outlook and independence she is unbelievably a firm traditionalist too. It is only her devotion and trust to her husband which makes her a perfect traditionalist. Irrespective of her husband’s infidelity and play boy nature, she sticks to him like a devoted traditional Indian wife. She visits Malgudi hunting for her run away husband. She continues her husband hunting till the end of the story.

She makes her appearance only in three places. In the first meeting at the railway station, she is shown as a courageous modern woman. She terrifies
others with her menacing personality and words. Her second meeting with the author occurs in the house of T.M. The other side of her personality is revealed in this meet. She is shown as a devoted traditional wife, who dotes on her husband irrespective of his fooleries and indifference. She is so blinded by her love that she is ready to accept him as he is with all his short comings. “You must help me get at him.... A strange character. Sometimes I have felt like wringing his neck but on the whole I am very fond of him”( 66; ch.15) 

With tears in her eyes she tries to move the T.M. She narrates her old love story, the thrilling elopement and marriage, the arrest of her husband and the happy reunion. She explains how her cold verdict in the court under the compulsion of her parents changed his soft nature “It was not the trial and prosecution but my sworn statement read out at court that seemed to have shattered his faith.” ( 85-86; ch.17)

He became firm and hardened in his outlook. Their wedded life acquired a dull routine of a fifty-year old couple. She did her best to cheer him but she could succeed only partially. One fine day he vanished suddenly from her life. From that time onwards she was on the look out for her lost husband. But she couldn’t succeed. With her power and influence she spread her net far and wide. Though she was all modern, independent and powerful, like a traditional wife she wanted to have her husband by her side. Though husband hunting was a
tiresome job she continued it eagerly till she found him with the help of the T.M. Once he was found she parcels him to her place. Varma, T.M.’s friend compares her to legendary Savitri. Her action reminds Varma,

One of Savitri and Satyavan of our legends. How Savitri persistently followed Yama, the God of death, when he plucked away her husband’s life; how Savitri dogged his steps as he tried to move off, pleading and pleading until he yielded, and how Satyavan whose body had lain inert in the forest, revived and joined his wife.”(136; ch.27)

Like her legendary role model Savitri, she was keen in having her husband back. She was willing to forgive and forget all his fooleries and accept him with all his mistakes. With all her worldly wisdom she was foolish enough to believe his pretended love and affection.

How she was fooled by her husband the second time in her life was explained in the last meeting. For the third time she visits Malgudi to share her feelings with the T.M. With quivering voice she explained how her husband led a dual life, She confessed “He was an expert really in the art of deception. Now
I realize he must have lived a secret life parallely while creating an impression of living with me, all along.” (143; Ch.28)

Even at this juncture, she was not willing to give up. Like a traditional wife, she continues her chase. She visited Malgudi hoping to see him in T.M’s place. When she could not find him there she breaks down completely and began to sob uncontrollably. Finally she understands the bitter reality that

I should have been far happier if I had never met you or noticed your news-item about the Timbuctoo Man....or it would have been best if, earlier, I’d listened to my father’s advice to keep away from him...

(144;Ch.28)

4.5 CONCLUSION

The plights of the transitional women are beautifully brought out through Sarasa’s character. The transitional women could neither give up tradition whole-heartedly nor accept modern ideas willingly. They are tossed between the two. They could not find shelter in anything. They lead a sort of an uncertain life with no peace and comfort. They are fickle minded. Nothing could satisfy their temperament as they oscillate between tradition and modernity. Sarasa’s life would have been more peaceful and happier if she had accepted the
reality earlier and had left her husband undisturbed. She was bold enough to live alone but not modern enough to find peace and happiness in another man like Rosie. As a staunch traditionalist she would rather suffer with or without her husband than find peace else where. Unlike Rosie, she sticks firmly to the marriage code of Manu which stresses the tolerance and patience of Indian women. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, a faithful wife is expected to worship her husband as God, even if he is devoid of good qualities and unfaithful to his wife. Inspite of all her modernness, she is not willing to lead a husbandless life or find an alternative for her husband. Like a perfect traditionalist, she firmly believed that her slippery husband would seek her one day. With this hope, she continued her husband hunting.

The dire consequence is about to commence. The revolt of woman is in sight. What happens in all cases of revolt is happening in the case of the revolt of woman also. One deep sense of injury is obscuring the vision of woman eager for redress. Cut off from the active sympathy of man, she is unable to form an intelligent idea of what should satisfy her womanhood. She is unable to set up an ideal, which would mould her life, though she is determined to act. In her exasperation she has dicided to take the pattern of man for her copy. She imagines her object would be gained if she could only think, feel and act like man. Instead of eagerly copying man she has only to be awakened to one
consciousness of the power that resides in her, to realise how strong she really is and at what distance ahead of man she has been travelling. Woman would then feel ashamed of her desire to unsex herself. She would then cease to crave for that form of life, which can only drag her from the high pedestal she has been occupying. All training, all culture, should help to make the light in her soul shine with ever increasing brightness, and release her from the thralldom of senses which man has brought her under.