Chapter Six

The Evolving Image of the Emerging New Woman

She (Woman) is a rare type . . . devoted to the service of people and that is all her religion. Her worship takes the form of service to the poor and the ignorant and helping them live a decent life.

R.K. Narayan

Women appeared as the pinnacle of the beautiful creation of Nature. She is soft; tender; she is also pure. Only in women we can see the beauty of the sweet-scented flower and its innocent nature.

- Akilon

Woman is the mother of the race and is the liaison between generations. Indian culture, like any other culture, attaches much importance to women and therefore India has been symbolized as ‘Mother India’, keeping in view women’s exemplary qualities of patience, endurance, love, affection, sympathy and generosity. Modern novelists, who envisage basic changes in society, use it as a new technique and ‘metaphor’ to express their vision of new women through the presentation of women characters. For women are the very life-force who can engender revolutionary changes. As Nehru aptly puts it, “To awaken the people it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves” (qtd in Madan 112)).
Woman who is hailed as 'half of man' and 'better half' too is denied her due place in society. Indian social set up is such as to keep her bound to her home. Even now, after entering the twenty-first century, despite the great strides made in the fields of science and technology, the male chauvinism is still the major familial and social or societal determinant. Though man and woman are hailed as two wings of the society, male domination persists Indian society, due to a new type of conscientisation, is in the throes of the birth of a new value system. Women are aware that much of what goes by the moral code has been ruthlessly exploited by the male species to keep them perpetually under subjugation. Hence women are in the fore fighting for the establishment of a new code of conduct in the new society and so the emergence of the 'New Women' is inevitable.

"In the Vedic and pre-Vedic times\(^1\) a woman enjoyed equality with man . . . for she could sit next to men and perform 'yagnas'"\(^2\) (Uma 1). She shared equal rights and responsibilities with her husband in the family. She was an invincible part of her husband and her presence was inevitable in every religious function. With the development of the idea of private

---

1. 200 B.C. and before Pre-vedic times obviously refer to the glorious period of the Dravidian, the quintessence of their culture gets reflected in the early Tamil literature and philosophical treaties of the First Sangam period when women and men were considered equal, and indeed were equal.

2. Yagnas means Vedic rituals.
property woman gradually lost her independent position. (Shah 16). Her physical weakness and other disadvantages led the opposite sex to assign her an inferior status. “Her present day inferior position is the result of socio-cultural arrangement of the two sexes based on power and privileges” (8). She continued to fall lower and lower in the scale till the Code of Manu killed her autonomous status, independence and freedom. The Manu Smiriti sums up her position thus: “In her childhood [a girl] should be under the will of her father, in [her} youth, of [her] husband; her husband being dead, of her sons; a woman should never enjoy her own will” (120)

With the advent of British rule a new social era emerged. The Christian missionaries brought a revolution in the society by highlighting the social evils existing in the Indian social structure. Western education introduced a new pattern of thinking whose major characteristics were nationalism, democracy and liberalism (Shah 31). It awakened the conscience of thinking men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who advocated “...to abolish Sati, to allow widow remarriage, abolish child marriage etc” (32). Several social reformers championed the cause of women and undertook to alleviate the sufferings of women. Gandhiji’s contribution in this respect was immense and certain women’s organisations also took up the cause of
women. However, the pace of women’s welfare work during the British rule was very slow and it gained momentum only after independence.

The emergence of woman as an independent force in family as well as in public life is the main focus of the novels of the post independent era. The novelists portray how woman’s battle against the silent suppression of man and other social evils has resulted in unexpected changes in the society. The novels of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Akilon and Indra Parthasarathy have given expression to the cries of women and created an awareness in the public mind. Narayan and Akilon are examples of two outstanding contemporary novelists who have given voice to the liberation of women. Of all the novels of Narayan, *The Dark Room*, (1938) *The Guide* (1963) and *The Painter of Signs* (1976) stand apart as a distinct trilogy with regard to the delineation of women characters in general and the emerging new woman in particular. From Savitri in *The Dark Room* to Daisy in *The Painter of Signs*, the evolution of the ‘new woman’ is portrayed by the Malgudi novelist in three different stages. A similar pattern may be discerned in Akilon’s novels too, *Pen* (1947), *Pon Malar* (1965) and *Cittirapāvai* (1968).

Against the backdrop of a changing Indian society, which is faithfully reflected in the imaginary Malgudi, Narayan weaves his human comedy.
The different changes revealed by different women characters at different points of time makes a mark on the orthodox Indian society with its age-old culture, beliefs and superstitions. The story of Savitri (DR) is a moving tale of a tormented wife and she presents a piece of life as one actually finds in reality. Savitri makes the first phase of the evolution of woman from implicit obedience to equality. Rosie’s (Gu) story is tragic in another way. She derives no peace out of the two men with whom she is forced by circumstances to live as ‘man-woman’. Rosie signifies the second phase of evolution, the growth of woman from illiteracy to enlightenment. Daisy (PS) fully extricates herself away from the chauvinist family and stands out as a fully developed independent woman. Daisy makes the third phase and holds aloft the status of woman from a device of child-bearing machine to the planner of the family and decision-maker.

Dominating husbands like Ramani and patient wives like Savitri are quite common features of Indian society. Savitri “had not the slightest power to do anything at home and that after fifteen years of married life . . . .” (DR 6). Ramani’s attitude towards children at home and towards outsiders whom he takes home often as friends, causes irritation to Savitri. “Ramani was never in the habit of announcing in advance the arrival of a guest or of tolerating any poor Show in the dining room” (12). He has no sympathy
towards the overworked wife and he expects her to produce in a matter of minutes something edible, which will ‘uphold’ the honour of himself. “We are not so down-and-out yet as not to afford some extra food without having to issue warnings beforehand” (13). Such deeds are the daily routine of her life and she has got used to it. Ramani is completely responsible for the unhappy lot of Savitri. He belongs to the old conservative set of men who regarded marriage just as an institution, which demands implicit obedience of wife and consider her as a device for child bearing. Proud of his self-acquired status in life, his behaviour towards his wife and children alternate between mild enthusiasm and violent teasing.

As a result, the dutiful Savitri is driven into a darkroom where she moans and sulks. When he shouts at the children unreasonably or when he lashes her with hot words, she tolerates. But when he gets involved in an ‘affair’ with a woman, she finds it intolerable. “. . . he doesn’t care for me now . . . perhaps she is better than I am” 107). She thinks that his sincerity towards her will be affected if he keeps contact with another woman. She is pure and she expects purity from her husband. The submissive Savitri politely asks her husband to put an end to the affair. “This sort of thing has to stop, understand?” (109). When he ignores her polite request, she feels hurt,
The polite patient wife becomes a spirited woman who is no longer able to tolerate the conjugal atrocities of her unreasonable husband.

The outcome of her outburst is Savitri is ordered to 'get out' in the midnight. "Woman get away now" (112) says Ramani. She too is ready to "Starve and die in the open, under the sky" (113) rather than obliging to her 'impure' (112) husband. Flinging all her jewels away Savitri quits the place. This is the intolerable situation in which an uneducated middle class woman of India finds herself. Harsh experience teaches her that she owns nothing:

I don't posses anything in this world. 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.¹ (113)

Though she feels the agony of being separated from her children, Savitri exemplifies streaks of decisiveness. She decides not to compromise with her unsteady husband. Savitri's protest against the tradition-bound husband and her courage to quit her home is indeed the beginning and the first stage of the emergence of the 'New Woman'. The seeds are sown in the form of Savitri and the plant of freedom and joy is to sprout out as a logical

¹ This idea as voiced by Manu is deeply ingrained in the feminine psyche and the 'collective social unconscious' of the society. Savitri, thus, becomes the symbol of a woman iconoclast who inaugurates the very process of women's liberation by demolishing the outmoded and worn-out values of life.
corollary and as the law of nature. Savitri is a metaphor of one who assails the old cherished errors and superstitions.

Savitri quits her home (husband's home) with the intention of committing suicide. But she is rescued and finds a means of independent earning at the temple. Still the thoughts of children take her back home. She feels that what she has experienced should not happen to her daughters. She realises that economic independence together with education is a basic necessity for the safe and secure life of a woman. Pocketing her pride, Savitri returns home with the intention of educating her daughters. “Yes, Kamala and Sumati must take their university course and become independent” (120).

Two women of opposite characters are there in The Dark Room. One is Savitri, the uneducated, submissive wife of Ramani. The other is the educated, rebellious, pseudo-independent Shantabai. Savitri is an epitome of womanly virtues. She embodies the ideal qualities of devotion, tolerance and faithfulness. Her world centres round her home, husband and children. Ramani too extols her traditional virtues. “What a dutiful wife! Would rather starve than precede her husband. You are really like some of the women in our ancient books” (16). In spite of possessing all these noble qualities she happens to quit her home because she finds her husband morally weak. Just
as a man expects a woman to be faithful to him, a woman also has the right
to expect a man to be faithful to her. This fidelity dynamics is the foundation
of a healthy progressive family. The injustice done to her never drives her
lie low accepting it but prompts her to question it. In fact Savitri emerges as
the seed of a New Woman in her protest against her husband. Yet she
remains a typical Indian woman and housewife because she zealously guards
all her noble qualities of womanhood.

Savitri makes an unsuccessful attempt of attacking the double
standards existing in the society one for man and another for woman. As a
protest against it she takes an independent decision of leaving her husband.
In her efforts to find a job in the temple she moves from nothing to
everything. She realizes that education is most necessary to release woman
from the fetters of dependence to the fertile world of independence. Savitri
who reacts sharply by leaving home as a protest against her husband finally
returns. On the contrary Shanta Bai having found her life with the drunkard
husband a drudgery, leaves him forever. She secures a job for herself and
lives independently.

The husband of Savitri and Shamtabai do not have human
consideration towards their wives. This was the male attitude towards
women in the early decades of the present century and Savitri and Shanta Bai
are hapless victims of such an attitude. It takes more than two decades to lift Savitri from that low position and grant her the right to stand on her own self in the form of Rosie \((Gu)\) and another decade and five years to project a truly independent woman in Daisy \((PS)\). There is a distinct pattern of evolution as far as the central women characters in these three novels are concerned. As Narayan himself confesses:

This must have been an early testament of the ‘Women’s lib’ movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notion of her independence, her individuality, stature and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. (1963:119)

Savitri \((DR)\) never advances the theme of women’s liberation to a decisive resolution as Nora does in Ibsen’s Doll’s House.\(^1\) That is why Savitri returns home though with the intention of training her daughters to be independent. Nora on the other hand, flings the door and leaves forever.

Just like Savitri’s utterances echo the revolutionary voice of the emerging womanhood, Akilon’s Vatsala \((Pen)\) also raises her voice against

---

\(^1\) In Ibsen’s Doll’s House Nora bangs the door and leaves forever when she is dissatisfied for very strong genuine reasons with her husband Helmer.
her suppressed status. Her feeble attempt at protesting against the
domineering role of man strikes the first stage of the evolution of the
emerging New Woman. Sankari who represents the next stage of evolution,
being disgusted with the male treachery, decides to live alone. Sankari is an
independent woman who envisages that a woman can exist without man and
without depending on man. Anandi who takes the struggle of woman to the
third stage is a full-fledged image of the emerging New Woman because she
breaks the tradition itself by setting a new one, when she disowns her first
husband on the strong grounds of incompatibility and decides to go with the
man of her choice.

Vatsala is also a loving wife like Savitri (DR). But unlike Savitri
Vatsala has strong economic background, and she is the daughter of a rich
landlord. Vatsala is very proud and attaches much importance to societal
status and the whole life had a meaning to her only if it embodies in itself a
‘satus symbol’ in some form or the other. She wishes to keep her husband
Sandhanam in a high pedestal on par with the blue-blooded elites and the
powerful bureaucrats. She presumes that the only possible way to raise
status is by making him an officer of the Indian Civil Service, the most
coveted honour in the pre-independence Indian society. Sandhanam
promises to do ICS examination and pursues his studies in England. When
he returns home without the title of ICS, Vatsala feels humiliated and utterly disappointed. She loses her faith in her husband who has not kept his promise. When Sandhanam decides to go to his native village with the intention of re-organizing the lives of the poor, she refuses to follow him not because she ‘hates’ her husband but because she is wounded and pained to discover her husband’s inability to understand her ‘point of view’. Her protest, thus in a way, marks the first stage of the woman’s march towards the emergence of the ‘New Woman’. The woman would not any longer lie low and implicitly the male point of view because it is the husband’s ‘diktat’. She, on the other hand, should be heard, consulted and made part of the process of decision-making.

Vatsala and her husband stand as a foil to Savitri (DR) and Ramani in many ways. Unlike Savitri, Vatsala is educated and economically independent. Savitri’s protest is based on a genuine cause. She demands the same moral values to man and woman and cannot brook any double-standard in familial values. But Vatsala’s protest is based on pseudo-values. As a woman of her own whims and fancy she attaches too much importance to false values of life. Ramani (DR) never obliges Savitri because of his moral weakness. Sandhanam, morally a sound man, never yields to false caprice of his wife Vatsala. He is fully aware of the fact that he is going to involve
himself in a noble cause, he is going to dedicate himself for the welfare and uplift of a wider ‘circle’ than the family. So he ‘ignores’ her protest and leaves his wife.

Still, as a sensitive woman Vatsala misconceives that his ‘negligence’ of her is only due to his ‘male ego’. She is, therefore, disappointed when he says:

I don’t want luxurious life. Life in a palatial bungalow and excessive glamour embitters me. I wish to live like the crores and crores of the poor and I am going to work for their freedom by living with them. (66)

Vatsala’s protest stems from a misunderstanding of her husband and Sandhanam is also partly responsible for it. Vatsala regrets that her husband who is ready to do any sacrifice for the society and country fails to understand the tender feelings of his wife, fails to do the primary duty of serving his family. She says to herself:

Men are hard hearted. To achieve their goals they are ready to go to any extreme level without any guilty feeling. They are least bothered about the mind of a woman and its happiness and unhappiness. (68)
The sense of male supremacy sedimented in his blood hardens his ego and prevents him from staying any longer with Vatsala in her house. When Sandhanam asks her to go with him to his native village, she replies rather sternly, “I don’t come to that countryside” (68). Vatsala’s protest stands justifiable because in her situation, when she remains hurt and disappointed, no woman of self-respect would easily follow the man, who has not only deserted his vows, but ‘insulted’ the inner cravings of a woman. Still, after some days, when she comes to know about the nobility of his service, she too flies towards him. In her reunion with her husband she stands in comparison with Savitri. But Savitri comes back to her husband accepting ‘the status-quo’ whereas Vatsala unites with her husband as a result of genuine reconciliation. ‘Education and economic independence’ makes all the difference. The first stage of protest started by Savitri (DR) and Vatsala (Pen) gains more strength and poignancy in the characters of Rosie (Gu) and Sankari (PM) in their march towards the assertion of their legitimate rights and realization of the undying aspiration for recognition of their dignity of womanhood.

The women who strike the second phase of evolution are educationally and economically in a better position than those who caused the first phase of change. Rosie (Gu) is an M.A. degree holder and also a
dancer. Sankari (PM) is a professional practitioner of medicine. Both women come into close contact with more than one man in life. Rosie is the wife of Marco and later becomes the ‘enchantress’ of Raju. Sankari having been deceived by Gurumoorthy in her student life later comes into contact with Thirumoorthy whom she first mistakes to be Gurumoorthy. These women are more exposed to public life than the other group of women, which makes them easily accessible to liberated views. The sustaining vitality of life is a striking feature of these women.

Rosie (Gu) emerges with dreams and aspirations on her way to independent status. The opposing compulsions weigh heavily on Rosie’s life, propelling her along a path usually uncharatered for women in an Indian society. Having been born into a family of temple dancers who “are viewed as public women” (75), she has no option but to seize any opportunity of marriage. As Rosie is an educated girl, when Marco offers to marry her she readily accepts and their marriage takes place in an unconventional manner.

I had myself photographed clutching, the scroll of the university citation in one hand, and sent it to the advertiser.

Well, we met, he examined me and my certificate, we went to a Registrar and got married. (75)
In course of time she finds out that she has married an archeologist with no human warmth. “Dead and decaying things seemed to unloose his tongue and fire his imagination rather than things that lived and moved and swung their limbs” (72).

The society is not ready to look sympathetically at an independent woman, who seeks her own identity through her personal excellence. Like an average Indian, Marco, the educated man also thinks that it is enough for a woman to merge her name, identity and her dream in her husband’s and live shining under his glow. Raju, on the other hand, shows some understanding of the creative urge in Rosie and encourages her to come out of the shell and attain artistic excellence. Confined to a mechanical existence, Rosie’s instincts for dance cannot find fulfillment till she finds a patron in Raju. Raju, reared in the ancient tradition, lured by the glamour of new way of living, moves out of the walls of the family. Marco’s apathy and indifference towards her feelings and desires take such a cruel form that Rosie is easily flattered by the offer of Raju: “I am really very sorry to think of you, such a gem lost to the world. In his place I would have made you a queen of the world” (76).

The Rosie – Raju episode throws much light on the character of Rosie as an emerging new woman. Raju who first acted as a patron to her art later
becomes a money minded selfish person. Though he gains her favour out of his sympathy towards her, in course of time he too begins to show his true colour. When Raju commits forgery on her name, she hates him who plays the role of a swindler. He thinks if he shows Marco's letter to her "she might refuse to do anything except talk about his (Marco) nobility"(184).

Though Raju is released on bail, he has lost his hold on Rosie. "ever since she had released me from police custody, the mastery passed to her... she never spoke to me [Raju] except as to a tramp she had savaged" (195). She handles the situation with full dexterity that she needs no assistance of masculine power to guide her. Still, like Savitri in her second dark room (temple) felt homesickness, Rosie too feels for her husband. She even feels: "He may not admit me over the threshold, in which event it is far better to end one's life on his doorstep" (197).

Rosie is torn between two extremes, traditional at one end and modern at the other, she is traditional in her cravings for her husband and modern in her ability to solve problems without the dependence on the male sex. This amphidexterity is due to the inborn Indian culture and it enables the artist to portray the gradual emergence of 'New Woman' instead of hopping into the goal all on a sudden. Rosie resists the male domination of her husband and comes out. When Raju too tries to keep her as his
possession, she escapes. Neither Marco nor Raju loves her for her own sake. Rosie proves to both that she can stand alone. Raju appreciates her ability to manage her life and says, “Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life which had its own sustaining vitality” (199). Rosie is not the passive, self-effacing helpless victim of male fancy, but an independent woman able to stand on her own feet.

Sankari (PM) also marks the second stage and stands in comparison to Rosie (Gu). Sankari was deceived by Gurumoorthy when she was a college girl and she becomes a mother without wedlock. The motherless Sankari is left a destitute when her father commits suicide out of shame. Still she is not upset even though Gurumoorthy has deceived her and absconded. Sankari pursues studies by her earnest striving and undaunted courage and becomes a doctor. However an aversion towards male gender remains strong in her heart of hearts.

The second man whom Sankari encounters is Thirumoorthy and it happens in her hospital. First she suspects him to be Gurumoorthy. Only later she comes to know that he too is another evil person with all the traits of Gurumoorthy. She keeps contact with him with an ulterior motive of making him realize his ‘wickedness’. Though she never becomes a prey to his passion, she comes to know that he has spoilt many women. As a woman
engaged in social service, she considers it as an act of commitment and paramount duty to teach a lesson to Thirumoorthy. Like Rosie she too appeals as a complex character. Her speeches and actions often lead to wrong judgments. K.V. Jagannathan points out:

The speech and action of Sankari moved in different directions and puzzled us. She behaved in such a way that she who was good to good people also seemed her to be supporting the wicked. (22)

Sankari is often mistaken to be supporting the wicked man, and it is only a clever way of her handling of critical problems. Akilon himself in his introduction to the novel says that she appears to be accessible to the villain and it is only to trap him. “She is a fire hidden under ashes” (PM 5).

Rosie and Sankari resemble each other in their complex character of being at once traditional and modern. Sankari appears to be traditional in jealously guarding her womanly virtues and honour, especially her chastity. She remains steadfast in her decision of remaining unmarried till the end of her life. Though Thirugnanam\(^1\) comes forward to marry her after knowing fully well that she is the unwedded mother of a child\(^2\) she declines his offer

---

\(^1\) Thirugnanam is the cousin of Sankari. He admires and loves Sankari even from his early days.

\(^2\) Sankari is deceived by Gurumoorthy.
and stands out as the supreme example of an independent woman till the last. In taking revenge on Thirumoorthy she appeals as a masculine power. Rosie too becomes an independent woman towards the end of her life. In their relationship with the two men both of them closely resemble each other. Both Rosie and Sankari are deserted by the first man whom they come into contact with. Rosie is disowned by Marco, her husband and Sankari is deserted by her lover Gurumoorthy. Though the two women are estranged from their men in different situations, the ends are the same. The second man who involves in each other’s life is disowned by themselves. Rosie leaves Raju, Sankari discards Thirumoorthy and subjects him to die in an accident, perhaps that is the way ‘nemesis’ works.

Both Sankari and Rosie are symbols of change. They typify the modern Indian woman who seeks release from the clutches of male dependence. Both women are extremely bold. They are not like Savitri (DR) who accepts her husband with all his faults or like Vatsala (Pen) who reconciles with her egoistic husband. But they are modern women who fight against the injustice with steadfast earnestness and courage. Both Rosie and Sankari have the beauty and dignity, which sustain them throughout their sufferings and tribulations. What makes the delineation of these women particularly striking is the fact that they anticipate the evolution of New
Woman who asserts her individuality. In the words of G.P. Sarma, "They are extremely interesting for the light they throw on the recesses of Indian woman's heart" (53). Rosie and Sankari, the freedom loving women who resist male fancy are the awakened women who pave way for the fully developed 'New Woman' of Daisy and Anandi.

Daisy (PS) and Anandi (CP) respect the spirit of true liberation. Daisy is a dynamic character who is in control of all the events of her life. While Rosie depends on men folk in the beginning of her life, Daisy is strikingly modern in her total independence. She is absolutely unconventional and shatters all traditional notions of women. She has a "sort of unmitigated antagonism to conception" (87) against the traditional notion that a woman's glory lies in giving birth to number of children. Daisy, the woman who represents the third stage of the evolution of the New Woman is extremely liberal due to a resolution born out of her experience from the humiliating status to honourable liberation. "I was always obsessed with the thought that I ought to be doing something better, something more useful than this routine life" (129). She breaks away from the routine of woman's life and plans her own life.

It is the physico-psychological agony of life that engendered in her the extreme liberal attitude. She gets suffocated in a joint family into which
she was born and feels that her individuality is strangulated. It was a large joint family consisting of numerous brothers, sisters, uncles, sisters-in-law, grand aunts and cousins. Of these population fifteen were children. The household was like a hostel:

I sometimes wished I could be alone; there was no time or place to consider what one should do or think. Practically no privacy. Wherever I turned I would be spoken to or somebody would involve me in a game or expect me to do something or other. The noise at home, which no one else seemed to notice, was enough to madden me: at all time the cry of babies; the shouting of children; It was a mad house. Somehow everything there repelled me. (128)

Right from the age of thirteen when the prospective bridegroom visits her, she becomes conscious of her humiliating status as a doll.

They decked me in all jewellery pieces borrowed from my sister-in-law in the house, diamond and gold all over my ears neck and wrist and clad me in a heavy saree crackling with gold lace. I felt suffocated with all that stuff over me. I felt sick and felt that I was losing my identity . . . And then they
seated me like a doll, and I had to wait for the arrival of the eminent personage with his parents. (131)

At this very moment she has decided to break the walls of the doll’s house. Like a butterfly comes out breaking the cocoon, Daisy breaks the traditional custom of bride seeing. “I just strode up like a soldier, the jewellery jingling and the horrible lace rustling” (132). She hates the notion of one human being prostrating at the feet of another and refuses to make obeisance to the groom falling on the ground. Rather she asks him, “What class are you studying? . . . Can you sing?” (131). She offends the groom on his face and thus takes on the fossilized tradition of orthodoxy itself. The whole proposal collapses. She has damaged the reputation of the family and it is difficult to find a bridegroom for her or her sisters in the family. She happens to flee away from her family. Having been brought up and educated by the missionaries she takes up the mission of family planning as a ‘national service’.

Though she falls into courtship with Raman, the signboard painter, Daisy cannot get herself reconciled to the idea of family life. When Raman proposes marriage to her she does not commit herself but puts forth certain conditions in contrast to the old custom of putting forth conditions by the bridegroom.
Long ago I broke away from the routine of a woman’s life. There are millions of women who go through it happily. I am not one of them. I have planned for myself a different kind of life. I have a well-defined purpose from which I will not swerve... If you want to marry me, you must leave me to my own plans even when I am a wife. On any day you question why or how, I will leave you (158).

Raman is ready to marry her accepting all her conditions. In the beginning of their acquaintance Raman assesses Daisy with the conventional male attitude. She evokes his sense of wonder and curiosity. Her slightly masculine voice and her strong profession enthrall him. “Daisy! What a name for someone who looked so very Indian, traditional and gentle” (31).

Besides Daisy, Raman fades into insignificance. He appears to be an unheroic, weak-minded comic figure. It is amusing to see him think of himself as a considerate husband both charmed and frightened by Daisy’s imperious manner while she sits in authority like “Queen Victoria” or “Rani Jhansi, the warrior queen of Indian history” (80). When Daisy puts forth certain conditions for their marriage, excited and yet confused, Raman is bewildered. He is unable to decide what to accept and what to reject and is ready to accept her on her own terms. They would have no regular marriage
but Gandharva wedding, which amounts to entering into a social contract of living together as man and woman, on equal footing, each retaining his or her own freedom and autonomy. She would not be a housekeeper or a cook, they would have no children and he won’t question her ever. The dreaded Raman gropes for role models in the Indian epic “there was Rukmani and Krishna eloping to get married, there was Mohini, the enchantress, there was Shanthanu accepting Ganga on her terms” (Jain 109).

Daisy seems to be a great puzzle at every turn. When Raman floats high up in the sky of imagination, Daisy realizes that the arrangement of marriage is a trap to ensnare her soaring spirit. She boldly tells, “I have planned for myself a different kind of life” (159). She dismisses her relationship with Raman as her ‘moment of weakening’ (179). “She who has patterned her life so far breaking the culturally imposed narrow minded placid domesticity has the strength of will to transcend her biological urges.” She tells Raman, “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. It won’t work (179). Daisy comes out of the doll’s house and stands as a contrast to all other women in Narayan’s novels:

In a way Daisy fulfills the wish of Savitri in The Dark Room who wants to have education and independent existence. Torn
between instinct and ideals, this family planning zealot is a tragicomic personification of the hysterics of the new civilization. (Biswal 28)

She bids farewell to Raman and continues her mission with full spirit. She is the ‘New woman’ on whom no social inhibitions are clamped. She looks very simple in her appearance:

If she found an upturned packing case or a stone-slab she sat on it, cross-legged and never stirred until the bus came, without saying a word or noticing the people who stared at her. In order to be unnoticeable, she wore a saree of the drabbiest shade, never used any powder or make up, and did her hair up indifferently, and if it was ruffled in the wind, she smooths it out with her palm. (60)

The repulsive attitude of Daisy towards marriage may have been as a result of the male domination she has experienced in her family. She has developed an aversion towards marriage and she is unable to extricate herself from that trauma. When Raman offers himself to marry her accepting all her conditions she agrees all on a sudden. Only on second thought she is reminded of her past. She thinks it is the habit of man to give all false promises and behave honestly until he gets what he wants. Once his intention
is fulfilled he will throw away all his promises in the air and put on the old coats. He will try to thrust tradition on the poor damsel like Marco on Rosie. There is no telescope or scanner machine to predict the inner workings of a human mind. Her far-reaching thoughts are peculiar to the ‘New Woman’.

It might be attributed to Daisy’s decline of Raman’s offer that when she visits Raman’s house, he describes the latest arrangement he has made at home as a preparation for her reception. He has planned to send his aunt to Kasi. People who go there “do not generally want to return. A visit to Kasi is the end” (PS 52). Raman is not prepared to bid his aunt wholeheartedly as she has cherished so far. “She won’t come back”, he said childishly and wailed like a child, “she wants to go there and await death” (155). The vacillating tendency of Raman creates a vacuum in her mind about his character. Daisy sternly advises, “... so, Ram, don’t make a fuss. Let her seek her life’s pattern as she like” (156). She is tendering this advice in order to clear the way for herself. She is a ‘new woman’ who is stern, strong willed, ready to face the challenges of life but she is not one who is selfish enough to enjoy herself at the expense of others. In order to accommodate himself with her religions views Raman has locked up all the gods safely in a cupboard. Daisy does not encourage this attitude of Raman. She remarks, “... why move the gods? Leave them undisturbed in their old place” (156).
Though she is brought up by Christian missionaries she has no aversion towards Indian gods. She is a modern girl who has learnt the art of co-existing with people of other religions. Thus Daisy is an admirable symbol of the emerging new woman. “She cares not for wealth or luxury or titles. She can live with the poorest in their huts, eat their food and sleep on the mud floor” (PS 153).

Though Daisy is a new woman she remains Indian to her roots. If she objects to marry Raman it is due to the fear whether her professional life will be interrupted by the domestic life. For Daisy “home was a secondary matter, the primary one was work” (167). Though Daisy is a full-fledged modern woman in her non-dependence on males, as an emerging New Woman, she is half way through the social “ladder of uncountable steps” (Vaiyapuripillai 18). When she moves up a few more steps she may shed off her fear of marriage. If Savitri and Rosie have revolted against their doll’s house, Daisy seems to carry this revolt further, to its logical culmination to a heightened level. If Savitri is the representation of ‘an early testament of the women’s lib movement’ Daisy is its more pronounced representation where the ‘New Woman’ attains perfect consummation.

Daisy’s energy, zeal and dogged persistence evoke admiration of the readers. As William Walsh comments: “absolute conviction, untrammelled
modem mindedness, steel will and practicality make her a superb missionary in this cause” (158). She is almost a masculine female, most ‘undaisy’ like, as Raman sees her. She pursues her ‘steel framed itinerary’ unmindful of sniggering men and giggling women. Thus ready to fleet the male on their own terrain Daisy challenges male society. She does not whine or whimper, nor does she sulk or rebel. She has indeed crossed the stage of sulking, rebelling and whining and has trained herself to stand for her ‘self’.

The Indian woman grouping up through Savitri, Bharati and Rosie into Daisy has now come of age. She is an image of social revolt and knows the world for what it is. She fights, manages, endures but never whines or sulks in the dark room.

She is radically new role model. (Shanta Kirshnaswamy 134)

She bids farewell to Raman and continues her mission with full spirit. She is the ‘New Woman’ on whom no social inhibitions are clamped. Just like Narayan’s women in his trilogy Akilon’s women characters also show a gradual development leading to the attainment of total emancipation in his trilogy Pen, Pongmalar and Cittirapavai.

Like Daisy (PS) of Narayan, Anandi (CP) of Akilon represents the New Woman and she is totally different from Vatsala (Pen) and partially different from Sankari (PM). Like Sankari, Anandi is a strong character but
she looks like a delicate darling. She attaches great importance to moral values, but she resists blind tradition. Because of the importance she attaches to moral values she accepts Manickom as her husband. But when she finds him to be evil minded, and when she finds no possibility for his regeneration, she leaves him. Daisy represents total emancipation in her non-dependence on man. Anandi (CP), on the other hand, though goes to live with another man (Annamalai) she is bound by service and dedication. Anandi is modern in the sense that she breaks the tradition, lives all by herself and gives life to the deserted man.

Anandi represents Akilon’s full-fledged emancipated woman. Though Anandi and Annamalai are mutually attracted towards each other they have not revealed it. Circumstances force them to be life partners of Manickom and Sundari respectively who are wicked and inhuman. The puritanical upbringing of Anandi has instilled in her mind strange notions of chastity that she considers herself desecrated when Manickom by force kisses her. She has such a noble idea of love that Anandi considers her to be ineligible to marry Annamalai. After becoming the wife of Manickom, Anandi is subjected to inexplicable torture by her husband and his mother.

When Anandi is no longer able to bear the atrocities of the callous materialist Manickom, she uprises. Annamalai is deliberately driven into
financial entanglements by the vily Manickom. As a result Sundari is fed up with her life and goes back to her parents who do not offer her any shelter and she commits suicide. Annamalai becomes a widower and still Manickom goes on inflicting mental agony on Annamalai day after day. He even goes to the extent of vacating Annamalai from his house by sending a court notice. Anandi feels that it is the proper time to let out all her heart thrivings and extend moral support and protect Annamalai who is worshipping her in his heart of hearts.

Though Anandi is reduced into skeleton due to the marital incompatibility, her spirit is rejuvenated when she is ready to fight against injustice. In her readiness to punish the erring husband, she stands out as a unique character. She points out that his dealings with Annamalai are contrary to dharma. “You are now attacking with knife on the back of the person who helped you to get loan” (510). She is not ready to consider him as a human being at all.

You are ready to do any obnoxious deed in order to acquire money and land, to fulfill beastly pleasures, and to boast yourself as a man of high status. How can men like you be called human beings? (511)
Manickom feels insulted, loses his temper and wants to kill her on the spot. A tussle issues forth between the two. In a fit of anger when she pushes him aside, the maṅgalyam of Anandi is wrenched away by Manickom. She heaves a sigh of relief and says, “hereafter I’m not your wife and you are not my husband” (512). Refusing to wear it back, Anandi leaves the house of Manickom and boldly walks into Annamalai’s room where he is engaged in giving the finishing touches to a portrait of her. She realizes that she is the inspiring source behind his artistic venture and comes forward to support him by declaring her deep love towards him.

Marriage is supposed to be a contract that brings together a man and woman into the holy bond of family. In the case of Anandi, her decision to marry Manickom who is ill matched to her in every respect seems to be a foolish decision taken out of ignorance. Anandi, an embodiment of womanly virtues, hopes that she can redeem her husband from evil ways. When she fails in her attempt, when she attains worldly wisdom and maturity, she resists Manickom and is even ready to break the bond of marriage. It may sound contradictory to the Indian traditional views and the notion of Indian womanhood. But Anandi’s stand cannot but be justified if one really understands the diabolic machinations of Manickom. Moreover, it is only because of the high values she attaches to the ‘Maṅgalyam’ that she has
tolerated him so far. Only when Manickom has wrenched away the Mangalyam from her neck that she dares to leave him. In this respect Anandi is portrayed as an emancipated Indian woman.

Some people tend to break away the rigid laws of the society in their attempt of satisfying their souls urge. But Anandi breaks the laws of the society, breaks the bond of marriage not merely to satisfy her soul’s urge, but also to teach a lesson to her brutal husband. She breaks the tradition by leaving her cruel, inhuman husband and joining with her affectionate, humane lover, by the law of human nature, which one has to obey at one or the other stage in life.

Such unions are justified and considered to be inevitable in the novels. It may appear wrong to the eyes of the society. But to the concerned person it is an inevitable and rightful thing. It shows that the needs based on natural instinct force them to obliterate even the strictest laws of society. (Manian 87)

As Kailasapathy points out, “they [the ‘new women’] are entangled in the emotional crisis arising out of human relationship in their attempt to prove their identity” (74). Their actions and reactions take the readers into unknown vistas of human mind and prompt them to reconsider the human values and deduce the ‘New Woman’. Savitri (DR) and Vatsala (Pen) stand
for the initial stage of at least questioning, but not leave, their husbands Ramani and Sandhanam respectively. Rosie (Gu) and Sankari (PM) continue it further by resolving to stay alone without seeking the husband or the lover who had deserted them. Daisy (PS) and Anandi (CP) go ahead a step further, the former by deciding not to marry and the latter by breaking the tradition, by leaving the husband and joining with the lover. Of course, there is a painful conflict in their minds before taking the final decision. In the case of Daisy the conflict is between the personal interest and the national interest and finally the personal interest gives way for the national interest. And she resolves to continue the journey of life without the helping hand of any male counterpart.

In the case of Anandi, the conflict is between justice and injustice, dharma and adharma. When she witnesses that the wicked Manickom has driven Annamalai into the verge of destruction she feels that it is her duty to uphold justice and save Annamalai. The unequal moral codes and double standards offend her mind. An erring girl is punished forever. An erring boy, on the other hand, escapes. For instance, Sankari remains unmarried up to the end of her life in consequence of the injustice meted out to her by a wicked man. When a married man develops illicit relationship with another woman it is overlooked. Whether a man follows monogamy or polygamy it
is not a serious matter. But even if a widow remarries she is treated as a social outcaste. For example, because Anandi’s mother happens to be a widow married to Kathiresan, Annamalai’s father does not accept the proposal of Kathiresan, the father of Anandi. Women characters like Savitri (DR), Sankari (PM) and Anandi (CP) amply demonstrate that as long as unequal moral codes exist in society, there cannot be any ‘gender justice’ and there cannot be any true redemption for women.

Savitri (DR) and Vatsala (Pe?) thus inaugurate the very process of evolution of the image of the emerging ‘New Woman’ and set in motion the first stage. Their initial protest against their husbands is revealed in their ability to interrogate, demand for accountability, and courage to non-cooperate for a genuine cause. Though their protest seems mild, its intensity is far greater. Rosie (Gu) and Sankari (PM), who are educated and independent, carry on the crusade for freedom and independence. They are dominating, strong-minded, unyielding, and strike a unique note in their quest for autonomous independence. In Dairy (PS) and Anandi (CP) the quest for liberation and dignified womanhood reaches its inevitable culmination. The former achieves it by her total non-dependence on man while the latter realizes it by breaking the oppressive tradition itself. The ultimate image evolved is that the ‘New Woman’ is one who is hot like sun
and cold like ice; strong and powerful like diamond and soft and gentle like the petals of the Rose; dared to meet the sunshine and winter alike. She is the embodiment of all the womanly virtues. Yet she does break the tradition when she finds it incompatible for her true freedom. She is neither accessible nor unattainable, but she is one who honours her conscience, revitalises the moral values and insists that the socio-conjugal code of conduct and socio-gender value system must be the same for man and woman. The ‘New Woman’ is, in short, “the fire in the ashes” – indeed a fire that destroys the ‘dead yesterday’ and purifies the ‘living present’, so that the ‘unborn tomorrow’ shall be bright and prosperous for the entire mankind.