CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. General

R.K.Narayan opens a window on the mosaic of the Indian panorama that is exuberant with cultural, ethnic and spiritual dimensions. The Indian psyche and its poised expression find their way into the style of Narayan’s lucid and transparent language. The innumerable nuances of finer sentiments that find expression through his characters are said to have a solid foundation in the age-old tradition of India. This tradition is a mirror of the instructions and lessons found in the ‘Vedas’, the oldest scriptural injunction that is alive in the lives of an entire nation.

1.2. Vedas

‘Veda’ is a body of ancient Indian sacred writings. The four major collections included in this literature are Rigveda, containing sacrificial hymns addressed to the gods; Yajurveda containing liturgical formulas; Samaveda, a group of hymns chiefly in honour of Indra; Atharvaveda, a large collection of charms and incantations. These four Vedas, The Mahabharata (which includes The Bhagavad-Gita), Pancharatra and the original Ramayana are all called Vedic literature. The Vaisnava supplements and the Puranas too are Vedic literature. The corollary literatures like the Samhitas and the commentaries of the great teachers who guided the course of Vedic thoughts for centuries also come under Vedic literature. The historical facts and bona fide stories mentioned in the Puranas are called the fifth Veda.
The Upanishads are a part of the Vedas. They are a compilation of 108 philosophical discourses. The word Upa-ni-sat means ‘sit closely’ and thus may refer to the devotees sitting close by the side of the spiritual guru and receiving transcendental Vedic wisdom. In other words, The Upanishads are dialogues between self-realized souls and their disciples on the theme of Absolute Truth. One may find that the philosophical aspects of all the significant proceedings and practices of knowledge that are given in the Vedas are discussed in The Upanishads. ‘Veda’ means ‘Knowledge’ and ‘anta’ means ‘end’. So Vedanta means “end of knowledge”. The Upanishads are popularly known as Vedanta. “The purpose of The Upanishads is to philosophically establish the personal feature of the Absolute Truth as transcendental to material names, forms, qualities and actions” (http://www.indiadivine.org/ upanishads-darshanas1.htm). The Upanishads are said to be the most important portion that contain the knowledge part of the Vedas. The philosophy of The Upanishads is said to be transcendental and enlightening. They discuss the identity of the individual soul and the Supreme soul. To put it in a nutshell, they reveal the most profound and metaphysical truths.

The Vedas are mainly hymns chanted by priests in praise of gods. For so many centuries they were not written down. The Vedas are in fact said to be pronounced by the Supreme Lord, Iswara. While glorifying the Vedas Sri Swami Sivananda aptly observes:
The Vedas are eternal. They are without beginning and end. Vedas came out of the breath of the Lord. They are not the composition of any human mind. They were never written, never created. They are eternal and impersonal. The date of the Vedas has never been fixed. It can never be fixed. Vedas are eternal spiritual truths. Vedas are an embodiment of divine knowledge. (http://www.sivanandadlshq.org/religions/veda.htm)

The Vedic scriptures are very vast in range. *The Rigveda* contains one thousand and seventeen hymns. *The Mahabharata* consists of one lakh and thousand couplets. The eighteen chief Puranas contain hundreds of thousands of verses.

The Vedic literature imparts knowledge of self-realization by the help of which one can attain liberation (*Moksha*) from the miseries of the material world. The Vedic literature affirms that the material life is a synonym of sufferings. Yet the living entities are under an illusion that they are advancing on the path of material happiness. They forget the most vital truth that in the material world everyone is subjected to the miseries of birth, death, old age and disease. The Vedic knowledge assures that it would enable a sincere enquirer to get liberated from this bondage. Vedic literature throws light on another three-fold set of miseries too. They are miseries arising from the body itself, miseries caused by other living entities and miseries arising from natural disturbances. The forces of time and death compel everyone to leave the earth, for the earth is *Mrtyuloka*, place of death. It is also termed *Duhkhalayam* (a
place of miseries) and Asasvatam (temporary). The Vedas affirm that the objective behind the human birth, which is very scarce, is not to waste the life in a temporary and miserable world, but to aspire and strive for permanent happiness. To those, who follow the Vedic formula religiously, life is an opportunity to attain victory over death. The Vedas declare that liberation from repeated births and deaths and miseries affiliated to them is a prerogative granted to human beings alone and not to the lower species. So one who quits the world without understanding the science of self-realization is considered less intelligent.

The Vedas are absolute and self-authoritative. They depend on nothing other than themselves for explanation. They are supremely authoritative because they are said to have arisen from Narayana (Bhagavan) Himself. In other words, all the Vedas (Sama, Atharva, Rig and Yajur) as well as the Puranas and Itihās manifested themselves from the Supreme Being, Narayana. Formerly the Vedas came down by word of mouth but later the sage, Vyasa Deva, compiled all the vedic sastras in written form. It is evident from the Vedic verses that there is a hard line link between the Vedic message and the Vedic medium. Out of the three knowledge-gaining processes namely, Pratyaksha (empirical sensual perception), Anumana (theories based on evidence) and Sabdha (hearing from vedic literature), the Sabdha is considered to be the most dependable, convincing and perfect. According to the Vedas, the other two knowledge-acquiring modes are defective. First of all, a human being is liable to make mistakes irrespective of
his intellectual calibre and precision. Secondly a human being is always subjected to illusion. It is merely because he thinks or rather believes that he is the body while the truth is that he is not the body, but a spirit soul. Until he gets at this truth he gets identified with family, community, religion, race or nationality. So the first step in transcendental knowledge is the realization that he is in a world of illusion and that his real identity is beyond the material body, which is just mortal. Thirdly the senses of the human being are limited or imperfect. Finally every human being has got the tendency to cheat. It is because when everyone’s knowledge is imperfect, one cheats others while instructing them.

Receiving transcendental knowledge from authority through aural reception is the Vedic standard. Material knowledge belongs to things within material world while transcendental knowledge belongs to things beyond the material world. The Vedas advocate a supreme original truth ungainable either by direct perception (prathyaksha) or by the indirect method (anumana). In other words, this transcendental truth can be gained only from an authority, a bona fide self-realized spiritual guru, through aural reception. It is categorically stated in The Bhagavad-Gita.

\[
\text{tad vidhi pranipatena} \\
\text{pariprasnena sevaya} \\
\text{upadeksyanti te jnanam} \\
\text{jnaninas tattva-darsinah.}
\]
(Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.) (Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is (Bhagavad-Gita)* 1972:262). So the Vedic truth reaches a student by descending process from the Vedas through a bona fide guru. According to Vedic injunctions, the guru must be a swami or master of the senses and not a slave to their dictates. He should not assume the titles of guru, swami and sanyasi (renounced monk) capriciously. He should not deviate from Vedic teachings through mental speculations. To him spiritual knowledge is the ultimate welfare for humanity. So naturally he lives a life that demonstrates detachment from material pleasures. Such a person would blissfully attain God. According to the Vedic literature such a person is *sudurlabha*, which means 'very rarely found'.

1.2.1. The Bhagavad-Gita

*The Bhagavad-Gita* is a dogma of universal truth, which is sublime and nonsectarian despite the fact that it is a part of Vedas that is said to be the fundamental scriptures of the Hindus. It relates the knowledge of the self and the ways of self-realization by answering two fundamental questions: 'Who am I?', and 'How can I live a happy and serene life in the material world, which is noted for its dualities?' It is written in the form of a dialogue, which takes place between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra just when the Great War between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is about to take place. The two armies stand opposing each other.
But Arjuna, seeing his revered Guru, dear friends, close relatives and many innocent warriors lined up on the opposite side hesitates to fight. Being moved by sentiments and thereby bewildered, he forgets the vital truth that it is the duty of a Ksatriya to be ever ready to fight in order to establish dharma. Then, Lord Krishna, who takes gracefully on his own the position of the charioteer to Arjuna, highlights Arjuna's sense of duty as a warrior and tells him specifically that he is just an instrument in the hands of the Supreme (Lord Krishna) and both the killer and the killed are Lord Krishna Himself. And also He urges him to surrender at His lotus feet and discharge his duty with complete faith in God (Lord Krishna) without selfish concern for personal triumph or gain. At this juncture one may be prompted to ask 'how could Arjuna, an associate of Lord Krishna, be ignorant or confused?' One may find the best answer to that question in the words of Prabhupada. According to him,

Being an associate of Lord Krishna, Arjuna was above all ignorance, but Arjuna was put into ignorance in the Battlefield of Kurukshetra just to question Lord Krishna about the problems of life so that the Lord could explain them for the benefit of future generations of human beings and chalk out the plan of life. Then man could act accordingly and perfect the mission of human life. (Bhagavad-Gita 1972:8)

The main goal of The Bhagavad-Gita is said to be helping people groping in the darkness of ignorance cross the ocean of metempsychosis and
reach the shore of spiritual liberation. And also it advocates freedom or happiness from the bondage of life by doing one's duty. Further, it is said to be advising on God-consciousness and doing one's duty perfectly without being attached to or affected by the results. In other words, one should perform one's duty as a service to the Lord and see God alone in everything in a spiritual frame of mind. In order to attain this end one may have to

... purify the body, mind, and intellect. One must learn to give up lust, anger, greed, and establish mastery over the six senses (hearing, touch, sight, taste, smell, and mind) by the purified intellect. One should always remember that all works are done by the energy of nature and that he or she is not the doer but only an instrument. One must try for excellence in all understandings but maintain equanimity in success and failure, gain and loss, and pain and pleasure. (http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/gita/agsgita.htm)

1.2.2. The Bhagavad-Gita as the Quintessence of all the Vedas.

Of all the Vedic writings, The Bhagavad-Gita is the best known and has been translated into many languages all over the world. It may be because it is issued from the lotus-like lips of Bhagavan Lord Krishna Himself. So if one reads and hears The Bhagavad-Gita regularly and attentively, it may be as good as one masters the entire Vedas. Prabhupada confirms it. He affirms, "This one book, Bhagavad-Gita, will suffice, because it is the essence of all Vedic literatures and especially because it is spoken by the
Supreme Personality of Godhead" (Bhagavad-Gita 1972:32). The words of Adi Sankara strengthen the same point. “From a clear knowledge of The Bhagavad-Gita all of the goals of human existence become fulfilled. Bhagavad-Gita is the manifest quintessence of all the teachings of the Vedic scriptures” (http://www.bhagavad-gita.us/bhagavad-gitafamouscomments.htm)

And above all this Lord Krishna Himself says in The Bhagavad-Gita:

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\begin{align*}
\text{sarvasya caham hrdi sannivisto} \\
\text{mattah smritir jnanam apohanam ca} \\
\text{vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyo} \\
\text{vedanta-krd veda-vid eva caham}
\end{align*}
\]

(I am seated in everyone’s heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. By all the Vedas, I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of Vedanta, and I am the knower of the Vedas.) (Prabhupada, Bhagavad-Gita 1972:730).

Sri Aurobindo, a great seer and prophet was influenced by The Bhagavad-Gita. It is obvious from the words of the Mother. According to her, “Sri Aurobindo considers the message of the Gita to be the basis of the great spiritual movement which has led and will lead humanity more and more to its liberation, that is to say, to its escape from falsehood and ignorance, towards the truth” (qtd. In Sri Aurobindo, blurb). The Bhagavad-Gita, with the translation and commentary of Sri Aurobindo, has indeed enriched the Indian writing In English.

1.3. Indian Writing In English
Though Indian Writing in English has a dual lineage and dual loyalty, it has been widely acknowledged today as an independent component of literature of the Commonwealth. While acknowledging the contribution made towards the growth of Indian writing in English by eminent writers like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, S. Radha Krishnan, Sri Aurobindo, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Kushwant Singh, Arun Joshi, Anita Desai, K.S. Venkataramani, Kamala Markandaya and Nayantra Saghal in the field of fiction and the pioneering efforts of Professor Srinivasa Iyengar in the field of criticism, one has to accept that the Indian fiction is usually equated with Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. They are called 'the founding fathers of Indo-Anglian fiction'. In other words, they are said to be ‘the big three’ or ‘the triumvirate’ in Indian Writing In English.

1.3.1. Mulk Raj Anand.

Mulk Raj Anand is a politically committed writer. He was born at Peshawar in 1905. He had his education in Lahore, London and Cambridge and had a doctorate in philosophy. He takes a profound interest in the problems of the oppressed, the downtrodden and the have-nots. And so in most of his novels, he deals with the sad plight of the overburdened and suppressed peasants who lack the power to fight against superstition and the prevailing social norms and conventions. One of the most outstanding trends developed among the literary figures in India immediately after independence was to apply a sociological approval to the problems of the people of the country. A number of persons with left-leaning philosophies tried to attribute
social and economic reasons to human ills and Anand's involvement in this
school of thought may be unfathomed. Anand was a staunch Marxist as well
as a social supporter of the Gandhian non-violence movement for national
liberation from the British colonial rule. He always seemed to have believed
that a writer had a duty towards the society in which he lived. And that might
be the reason why he indulged in creative writing with a definite purpose of
serving the society. And most of his books were autobiographical in nature.
May be because he wrote comprehensively on political instability, class and
caste exploitation, capitalistic corruption and the deplorable condition of
poverty in India, he was branded a left wing writer. Whatever may be the
reasons assigned to it, it is generally believed that he never got the
recognition as a writer that he deserved.

1.3.2. Raja Rao.

Raja Rao was born in Mysore in an orthodox Brahmin family in 1908. He had his schooling in Hyderabad and higher education at the University of
Aligarh. After studying there, he went to France as a research student of
literature. So naturally the French language influenced him. He was equally
well-versed in Sanskrit. While acknowledging the influence of French on him,
he observes in an interview with Siva Niranjan: "... the French influence is
very much there in my novels. But, as I told you, just as I am an Indian, so
Sanskrit is a part of me. If I am asked which influence is greater, I would say,
Sanskrit more than French .... The French influence is there, but the Sanskrit
influence is far greater" (1979:21:22). Writing was a Sadhana to him. It "is a
mode of prayer"(1979:20), in his own words. Further he says: "sadhana means to try to be in contact with the ultimate reality. It has been my endeavour all my life to be face to face with the ultimate" (1979:20). Raja Rao's way of writing is totally different from that of Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan. He never writes about the material problems like sufferings, desires, aspirations and dreams of the common people of India. According to Raja Rao,

The ultimate aim of man is spiritual or metaphysical .... In the Hindu Dharma, the Hindu conception of Purushartha are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. If you follow Dharma rightly, Artha and Kama come together. Moksha is the ultimate answer. So, I don't see any need to write about the poor man, because the poor man has his Dharma. (1979:20)

This philosophy of life that he might have imbibed from the Hindu Vedic thoughts is reflected in almost all his novels.

1.3.3. R.K.Narayan

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswamy, who shortened his name to R.K.Narayan at the suggestion of Graham Greene, a great admirer and well-wisher of Narayan, has been acclaimed one of the most successful professional writers of modern India. He was born on the tenth of October 1907 in Madras (Chennai) to an orthodox and pious Brahmin parents. His name at home was Kunjappa. When his father got a job of a school teacher in Mysore, the parents moved to Mysore along with his brother and sister
leaving Narayan to the care of his maternal grandmother, Ammani, which had made all the difference in his life. Indian grandmothers are noted for their art of storytelling. She was so well-informed and enthusiastic to impart her knowledge to others that Narayan recalls her image and says in his autobiography, *My Days*: “Grandmotherhood was a wrong vocation for her; she ought to have been a school inspectress. She had an absolute passion to teach and mould a young mind”(1986:11). Narayan was blessed with the opportunity of learning fast the basics of language, literature and religion from her. She, in fact, taught him the Tamil alphabet, how to multiply, how to recite Sanskrit prayers in honour of Hindu gods and goddesses and how to sing classical songs. This kind of an introduction to Indian classical myths and Vedic poetry at a very young age helped him store them in his mind and allow them to become a part of his own consciousness in the long run. This in turn has helped him immensely to give shape and meaning to his life and work finally.

Narayan's deep knowledge of the Vedas and his strong conviction in the pure spirit of Hinduism and its time tested ideals are revealed the way and the frequency with which he refers to *The Bhagavad-Gita*, which is said to be the nectar of all Vedic literatures. The most essential requirement on the part of one who intends to dive very deep into the great theistic philosophy embedded in *The Bhagavad-Gita* is the readiness on one's part to accept Lord Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. R.K. Narayan acknowledges this transcendental quality of Lord Krishna in his retold legend
Gods, Demons and Others. He says that Krishna "...is the ultimate Godhead, called Narayan, Iswara or Mahashakti. From the Timeless Being all activity, philosophy, scripture, stories, gods and demons, heroes and epochs, emanate, and in Him everything terminates" (1964:14). The Bhagavad-Gita confirms it.

\[
\begin{align*}
 & bhuktaram yajna-tapasam \\
 & sarva-loka-mahesvaram \\
 & suhrdam sarva-bhutanam \\
 & jnatva mam santim rocchati
\end{align*}
\]

(A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries.) (Prabhupada, Bhagavad-Gita 1972: 305). Further, it is stated in Brahma-Samhita (5-52):

\[
\begin{align*}
 & yac-caksur esa savita sakala-grahanam \\
 & raja samasta-sura-murtir asesa-tejah \\
 & yasyajnaya bhramati sambhrtaka-la-cakro \\
 & govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami
\end{align*}
\]

("Let me worship", Lord Brahma said, "the supreme personality of Godhead, Govinda [Krishna], who is the original person and under whose order the sun, which is the king of all planets, is assuming immense power and heat. The sun represents the eye of the Lord and traverses its orbit in obedience to His order"). (qtd.in Prabhupada, Bhagavad-Gita 1972: 216).
Those who worship the demigods do not realize the fundamental truth that the demigods are also not permanent or immortal. So the demigods including Brahma cannot be brought on par with the Supreme Being, Narayana, for He is the cause of all causes. Understanding this fundamental truth R.K.Narayan says: “Brahma’s own life-span is a hundred celestial years, at the end of which he himself is dissolved, and nothing is left of creation or the creator” (Gods, Demons and Others, 1964:14). The Bhagavad-Gita confirms this too. “... four yugas, rotating a thousand times, comprise one day of Brahma, and the same number comprise one night. Brahma lives one hundred of such “years” and then dies”(Prabhupada, Bhagavad-Gita 1972:434).

As a student, Narayan was quite indifferent. One may be amazed, perhaps, to know that he failed in the High school and intermediate examinations. He managed to graduate from Maharaja’s College, Mysore, when he was twenty-four years old. He had been inclined towards creative writing right from his childhood and so it happened that initially he tried his luck in journalism. Though he did not succeed in it, his journalistic training helped him use English with ease and observe the life of the people around accurately. His English has a characteristic Indian flavour and his characters are mostly middle class and lower middle class people.

Narayan was, indeed, amazed by the inspiration he received for his first novel. It simply swam into his mind, all ready-made. It was on Graham Greene’s recommendation that his first novel Swami and Friends (1935) was
published. That was a great landmark in the history of Indian writing in English, for it marked the birth of a great novelist who reigned supreme for over sixty years in Indian writing in English. His next novel The Bachelor of Arts was published in 1937. He could publish this novel also with the help of Graham Greene. But its reception was not encouraging. His third novel The Dark Room was published in 1938. It is the only Pre-Independence novel, which is not autobiographical. Then came The English Teacher (1946), which proved to be a turning point in his literary career. It is the last Pre-Independence novel of Narayan. In all these novels of Narayan, family is the matrix.

Narayan's next period (Post-Independence) in the literary career began in 1949 with the publication of Mr. Sampath. In 1952, he published The Financial Expert, an allegory on the evils of money. That was followed by Waiting for the Mahatma (1955), which was the least successful of his novels. So he prudently decided that political figures and themes were not meant for him. In 1958, he published The Guide, which is said to be his masterpiece. His next novel, The Man-eater of Malgudi, (1962) may be taken as the most outstanding example of the maturity of his fictional skill. In 1967, Narayan produced The Vendor of Sweets in which he returns to the theme of an alienated son. He published The Painter of Signs in 1977, which is a novel with a definite echo from The Mahabharata. His next novel, A Tiger for Malgudi, published in 1986, is an enchanting work with a unique blend of ancient legend and comic vision. He produced his next novel Talkative Man in
1983. It is a delightful short novel, which presents a sombre tale of a man on the run from his marriage. *The World of Nagaraj*, published in 1990, throws light on the widening gap between generations. Narayan's last novel, *Grandmother's Tale* was published in 1992. It is no more than a novella. This is the only novel in which Narayan moves away from Malgudi. In addition to these fifteen novels, he has written short stories, retold legends, memoirs, essays and travelogues

1.4. Malgudi

The term 'Malgudi' has become almost a synonym of R.K.Narayan's creative writing. It is absolutely Narayan's brainchild. It has been developing gradually novel by novel from *Swami and Friends* to *The World of Nagaraj*. It may resemble any place in India, especially South India. It is a universal truth that the basic nature of the human beings is the same all over the world. So naturally Malgudi may be rightly called India in microcosm. Like Hardy's Wessex, Malgudi is the chosen region, which forms the background to the works of Narayan. It is always the field of action for the characters of Narayan in almost all his fictional works. But Narayan never deals with the physical geography of the place methodically. He simply allows it to be manifested between events. Though Narayan is enormously influenced by the Hindu Vedic thoughts, he never suppresses the possibility of the oriental flavour of Malgudi getting mixed with British influence. In other words, the small town of Malgudi is a mixture of both the East and the West.
Under a close scrutiny, one may understand that Malgudi is more or less like a character of Narayan in his novels. That may be the reason why Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly points out that Malgudi is 'the real hero of Narayan’s novels' (qtd. in Sharan, 1993:7). It is to be acknowledged that Malgudi has been influenced by changes of modernity taking place all over India gradually keeping in pace with the time. So consequently one may find a deterioration creeping into the life of the people of Malgudi as a result of the onslaught of modernity. But even at this stage Narayan makes almost all his characters within the grip of a culture imbibed from the ancient Vedic thoughts. Commenting on the Malgudian society and its traditions C.D. Narasimhaiah rightly observes: "He has scarcely stirred out of Malgudi nor have his characters; and if by ill-luck they did stray out of the municipal limits of Malgudi they invariably came back, sadder and wise—such is the spirit of the place, Malgudi the microcosm of traditional Indian society" (qtd. in Sharan, 1993: 7).

1.5. Personal Traits

Though R.K. Narayan has been one of the most popular and widely read novelists, he always remained very unassuming. By nature he was very reserved. The greatest merit in his character was that he was never a controversial figure. In other words, Narayan never ran into any kind of political, economic, moral or religious controversy. Though he was a staunch believer in Hinduism, he always respected other religions and faiths.
Narayan's demise in May 2001 was an irreparable loss to the literature-loving people not only of India, but also of the world.

**1.5.1. Honours and Awards**

R.K. Narayan had the distinction of receiving so many prestigious awards and honours. He won the Sahitya Academy Award for his novel *The Guide* in 1961. In 1964, he was honoured with the Padma Bhushan award. In 1980, he received the Arthur Christopher Benson award from the Royal Society of Literature. In 1981, he became the honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He was the recipient of the Soviet Land Nehru award in 1987. In 1995, he was nominated to the Rajya Sabha. In 2000, Narayan received one of the most coveted honours in India, the Padma Vibhushan.

**1.6. Aim of the Study**

R.K. Narayan's novels can be divided into two major groups namely Pre-Independence novels and Post-Independence novels. If one goes deep into his novels and attempts to evaluate his philosophy of life as revealed through them, one may find that *The English Teacher* stands as a landmark. At this juncture, one may be prompted to ask the following questions:

1) Is it justified to treat *The English Teacher* as a fulcrum or a transition period in the literary career and philosophy of life of Narayan?

2) What is Narayan's attitude towards life during the 'Pre-English Teacher period' and the 'Post-English Teacher' period?

3) How far has Narayan been influenced by the Hindu Vedic thoughts?
4) How far is the employment of myth important in the novels of Narayan?

5) Is there a conscious attempt on the part of Narayan to impart the wisdom of the Hindu Vedic thoughts to the readers?

6) How far has Narayan succeeded in expressing the Indian sensibilities in a western medium like English?

7) How far the use of English language—his lexical and syntactic repertoires—has helped him in achieving his objectives.

The aim of the proposed study is to probe into the details and answer these questions.

1.7. Significance of the Study

The present study is an approach to Narayan's novels in a Vedic perspective. When one approaches his novels, especially the novels under study, against the background of Vedic thoughts, one may find them assuming greater importance. The study is thought-provoking and may initiate at least the spiritually inclined ones to go through these novels after getting acquainted with the Vedic thoughts, especially the content of *The Bhagavad-Gita*. It assumes further significance, for no research work has been done so far on this aspect at the doctoral level in this university. It being a pioneering attempt, no review of earlier works could be presented.

1.8. Limitations of the Study

Of the fifteen novels of Narayan, only seven novels are taken for the study. They are: *The Dark Room, The English Teacher, Mr.Sampath, The...
Guide, *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, *The Painter of Signs* and *A Tiger for Malgudi*. They are chosen on their strength of being more relevant to the present study and also being apprehensive that the inclusion of all the novels might make the study unwieldy.

1.9. Methodology

The methodology used has been to analyse the novels under consideration carefully and follow the thought content and observe the changes coming over the philosophy of life of the author. Since no creation can be absolutely independent of the creator, the autobiographical elements are bound to register their mark on his work. So, the present study moves through a track to analyze them, draw conclusions from them and approach the novels under study based on these conclusions. Descriptive methodology has been used in the study of his language use.

1.10. Plan of the Study.

This dissertation consists of six chapters. They are:

1) Introduction.
2) Myth.
3) Transcendental Reality.
4) Didacticism.
5) Language Use.
6) Conclusion.
The abstract of each chapter is given below.

1.10.1. Chapter I: Introduction

In this chapter, the ancient sacred writings of India that constitute the Hindu Vedic scripture are explained. The importance of *The Bhagavad-Gita* among the Vedic writings and its influence on R.K.Narayan are highlighted. Then a reference is made to Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, two contemporaries of R.K.Narayan. A biographical outline of R.K.Narayan along with his novels and a brief account of his fictional world of Malgudi are included. The personal traits of Narayan and the honours and awards received by him are mentioned. Next to this, the aim, significance, limitations and methodology of the study are discussed. Finally comes the plan of the presentation of the study report.

1.10.2. Chapter II: Myth

This chapter focuses on the use of myths. The study of myths assumes importance, for myths are not merely long winding and exciting stories but a way of life to most of the Indians. Narayan made good use of these myths in his novels. In all the four Pre-Independence novels of Narayan, the use of myths is mellowed and its significance is implied rather than clearly stated.

In Mr. *Sampath* Narayan makes a complete and conscious attempt to use myth as a technique. In *The Guide* the mythical dimension is presented at a mere indistinct and moderate level of indirect suggestion. But in *The
Man-eater of Malgudi, Narayan takes up again the mythical dimension and improves on the structural concept he used in Mr. Sampath. The Man-eater of Malgudi is a modern myth in the sense that the ancient canons are admirably implanted in a realistic narration of modern South Indian life.

In The Painter of signs, there is no sustained mythical structure. In A Tiger for Malgudi, Narayan's fictional mode moves from myths to fable.

1.10.3. Chapter III: Transcendental Reality

Though Narayan had a very clear idea about the Hindu Vedic thoughts and knew about the eternal nature of the human soul, he could confirm it only after communicating with the spirit soul of his wife. Narayan has described this transcendental experience very vividly in his novel, The English Teacher. And this experience had a tremendous impact on his philosophy of life and it is revealed in his subsequent novels. Once one is certain about the eternal nature of the soul, it is only natural on one's part to indulge in an enquiry about one's self as 'who am I'? Narayan does it through the character of Srinivas in Mr. Sampath and Master in A Tiger for Malgudi. And once one gets the right answer to the enquiry that one is not the material body, but a spirit soul, automatically one's focus will be shifted on to one's karma. Narayan deals with it in The Man-eater of Malgudi and The Guide. The understanding of the significance of karma may lead one to have the realization that one is bound to have rebirth fashioned after one's karma. That is highlighted in A Tiger for Malgudi. So it is concluded in this chapter that The English Teacher
is a landmark in the life of Narayan and it provides a transition period or a turning point in his philosophy of life as well as literary career.

1.10.4. Chapter IV: Didacticism

This chapter probes into the didactic aspect by analysing characters like Srinivas and the old landlord in *Mr. Sampath*, Nataraj and Sastry in *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, Raju in *The Guide*, Master in *A Tiger for Malgudi* and Lakshmi in *The Painter of Signs*, who are designed in such a way to advocate the Vedic thoughts.

This chapter also highlights the fact that almost all his characters except those who are spiritually inclined are distressed and disillusioned. So it is evident from this that if one wants to enjoy the eternal bliss of happiness, one has to embrace the spirituality of the Vedic culture.

It is also revealed through the novels of Narayan that he does not try to impose his ideas on his readers and instead he simply suggests and tries to educate them through some of his characters that have been cast to suit his purpose. This chapter also acknowledges that Narayan practises what he preaches. This is very obvious from the way he maintains a restraint while describing female characters and sex in his novels.

1.10.5. Chapter V: Language Use
This chapter examines how far Narayan has succeeded in expressing the Indian sensibilities in a western medium like English, which is not his mother tongue. Narayan's craftsmanship lies where he uses English language with ease and perfection. His objective is to entertain and enlighten his readers in a simple style. He achieves his objectives by choosing the themes mainly from *The Epics* and *The Puranas*, introducing words of Indian origin, translating Tamil expressions, proverbs and aphorisms into English, using redundant exclamations, portraying a God-conscious society and faith in astrology, varying the style to suit the purpose of context and situations and by using humour with irony. In addition to these analyses, this chapter contains a comparative study of the language use of Narayan in his initial days and the final days.

1.10.6. Chapter VI: Conclusion

In this chapter all the questions raised in the introduction are answered on the basis of the analysis of the select novels taken for the present study. The future prospect for research in this type of study is also acknowledged.

A list of works cited is appended to the thesis.