Narayan's short stories explore the immense possibilities of the comic vision in their fictional setting, Malgudi. These short stories are grounded in the traditional Indian belief in ultimate integration and illustrate the social and moral codes governing the typical Indian society. The world of Narayan's comedy reinforces the suggestion that comedy has an inalienable link with the social sense and that it projects an individual seeking integration with the life of his society. The conviction is that the individual is less important than something wider and that the impulse on the part of the individual is to seek common ground with the rest of his kind. It is this social sense which manifests itself in Narayan's short stories and novels in general by upholding a social consciousness rooted in traditional morality which allows scope for a subtle play upon human frailties. True to the nature and genius of the comic tradition blended with the ancient art of story-telling resting on orality, Narayan's stories incorporate elements of exaggeration, repertory, fantasy, the improbable, the seemingly ludicrous, anecdote,
narrative within narrative to allow a free play of the mind between contemporaneity and antiquity and so on only to strengthen a suggestion that has profound contemporary relevance. "Lawley Road" with its stress on growing national self-consciousness, "Forty-Five a Month" suggesting that perpetual incarceration of soul and body is the way of life of a clerk, and "Under the Banyan Tree" conceiving of creativity as a gift of the divine are stories as varied as life itself and have an implied message to the community. Narayan is a master of comedy whose characters, as Graham Greene describes it, "vanish into life."

The short stories of Narayan taken up for consideration in this study represent a cross-section in the somewhat limited range of the canon. Since it is not possible to offer an extended reading of all the short stories, an attempt at selection has been made. On the whole however acquaintance with the themes of the short stories omitted from consideration in the dissertation has, I think, been reasonably indicated in the cross-references. Narayan has made a very engaging reading making my study a stimulating one. My debt to the Narayan scholarship is immense.
and has sufficiently been recorded in the dissertation. I express my deep sense of gratitude to my Research Supervisor, Dr. C.R. Viswaswara Rao, Reader in English, Sri Krishnadevaraya University, for his valuable suggestions and painstaking guidance. My sincere thanks are also due to Prof. A. Ramakrishna Rao and other members of the staff of the Department of English and Comparative Literature for their help and kindness.