Preface

R.K. Narayan occupies a distinct place in the realm of Indian Writing in English. He added fifteen novels to his fictional corpus during his literary career that spread over six decades. He is a writer who apparently looks simple but, beneath his simplicity, there lies a graceful and profound human vision of life. The narrative techniques employed in his novels enable him to make his world vision explicit and the content, more pleasing. This thesis is a product of my long labour on the suggested lines.

There are six chapters in the thesis. The “Introduction” underlines the need to study the element of craft in fiction and places Narayan in the context of his contemporaries. The chapter also outlines some of the formative influences on the writer that shaped his craft. The second chapter, “Narrative Perspective,” examines the nature of Narayan’s narrators, their relations to the stories, specific narrative devices including modes of discourse used in his novels. The third chapter, “Time Art,” explores the mythic consciousness at work in the novels of Narayan and the appropriation of various artistic devices with a view to making his world vision explicit. The fourth chapter, “Narrative Structure,” studies the skill of the writer in arranging events and incidents inside the narrative that gives an artistic unity to his work. The study also reveals how the content and the form coalesce, how reality and literary models run side by side in a single work. The fifth chapter, “Characterization,” throws light on the author’s use of various methods of characterization—descriptive, dramatic, psycho-analytic etc.—and discusses how these methods help him reveal his characters. The chapter also discusses the relationships between characters, character and theme, character and setting. The sixth chapter, “Writer to Reader,” makes a study of the art of Narayan playing to the imagination of the reader and how and to what extent the reader responds to his story and to the language used in the text. The chapter also discusses the intertextuality and elements of metafiction present in the novels of the writer.
An attempt has been made here to examine the craftsmanship involved in each novel of the author in its chronological order. This helps in tracing the development of Narayan's art and the gradual maturing of his craftsmanship. There are slight overlappings and repetitions of ideas and text references here and there. But I believe it is the context of the discussion that will justify them.