R.K. Narayan needs no introduction to an average reader. Yet the present work on him needs an introduction. He is admittedly the most readable and widely acclaimed as the greatest Indian fiction writer in English. He has contributed in his own way to the rich thought and technique of the form. Narayan's art as a novelist is due to his genius for humour. The sympathetic humour and broad humanity of Narayan has no parallel in Indian English fiction. Being the Head Master's son he had free access to the school library. He was interested in English Literature. So he read magazines and periodicals which arrived fresh from London and other parts of the world. In literature, fiction was his staple reading. He loved tragic endings in novels. So Mrs. Henry Wood’s novel *East Lynne* left a deep impression on him. He found Dickens very absorbing and interesting. The most satisfying book for him was H.G. Wells’ *Passionate Friends*. By reading journals and periodicals he began to acquire a critical taste. These journals inspired him to write composition. Thus his first creative work was *Friendship* which he wrote on the death of a close friend of his father.

I am fully aware that much of critical work has already been done on most of the aspects of R.K. Narayan as a novelist. But to the best of my knowledge, research on cultural awareness in the women characters of R.K. Narayan has not yet received sufficient critical attention. So guided by the recommendations of the Research Degree Committee and being aware of our limitations for the sake of convenience and clarity this study is divided into six chapters as summarised below:

Chapter one deals with cultural awareness its nature, function and values. Here we have defined the concepts concerning our study and
attempted to illustrate the nature, function and values of cultural awareness from Narayan's novels like; *The Bachelor of Arts*.

The second chapter deals with women in the early novels of R.K. Narayan and their cultural awareness. This chapter deals with something innovative, with each successive novel of Narayan we become more and more aware of the culture which shapes the lives of his major characters as in *The Dark Room* and *The English Teacher*.

The third chapter deals with women and their cultural awareness in Narayan's later novels. In this chapter we have shown how Narayan has brought out both orthodoxy and changeability as in his later novels like; *Waiting for the Mahatma*.

The fourth chapter deals with Cross Cultural awareness of women in Narayan's earlier and later novels.

The fifth chapter deals with Narayan's philosophy of life based on cultural awareness in his major women characters. Narayan philosophy of life corresponds to the world in which he has grown. There are three worlds involved here - the reader's actual world, Narayan's actual world, and the world he has created for us.

The sixth and the last chapter is the emerging picture, summing up or the conclusion which forms the end of the thesis. It puts together all the insights derived at in the thesis.

The original plan of the work was slightly different but we are obliged to follow the suggestion of the Research Degree Committee and as a result we incorporated the suggestions and modifications as recommended by the Research Degree Committee.

In the body of each chapter the names of the novels referred to or quoted from are given in brackets (or mentioned in the body of the
paragraph) where R.K.Narayan's works are referred to or quoted from they are given in brackets in abbreviated form, along with their page numbers, that obviates the need to refer to them in the end references. The abbreviations used are listed on a separate page. All references come as end notes at the end of each chapter. They are documented according to the MLA Handbook to writers of Research Papers (pg.184-193). The Bibliography given at the end of the present work is prepared on the principals of documentation of bibliographic form recommended in section 5.8.3 on page 184 MLA Handbook.

The present study lays no claims to be all inclusive or thorough, but we have made a reasonable attempt to bring out cultural awareness in women characters in R.K.Narayan's fiction. We are aware that the same theme could be treated better by other researchers and that is our asset as well as forgivable limitation.