CONCLUSIONS

R.K. Narayan is a prolific writer whose forte is prose narrative in general and fiction and short stories in particular. In the preceding pages an attempt has been made to assess the special quality of Narayan's Indo-English fiction and also to examine how far his Malgudi represents changing India and the dynamic profile of Indian life. The various aspects of changing India and its life viewed by Narayan through his fictional kaleidoscope, Malgudi, and presented to his readers have been arranged, analysed and commented upon. Besides showing the influence of social change on the art of Narayan, each of his eleven novels published so far has been taken up for a detailed analysis in terms of theme, characters and their interaction. However, it needs to be clarified that the present study does not aim at either emphasizing or establishing a sociological or an economic theory about Narayan's Malgudi. That is impossible, for, Malgudi is but a fictional entity.

It has been conclusively proved that socio-economic transformation of Indian life is invariably present in Narayan's fiction. His concern with the delineation of social change in India through his novels is so perfectly consummated in his art that to isolate it as a separate entity is fraught with dangers. It has been observed, however, that Narayan has faithfully drawn from the pressures and the compulsions of Indian life more particularly of the past seven decades in the writing of his novels. That makes his literary career spread over the last four decades both meaningful and impressive. Though this achievement may call for him the title: 'a social historian' it becomes, at the same time, an essential aspect of his authenticity as an artist. Narayan's social awareness as part of his artistic quality has been amply demonstrated through his fiction. Together with that, one is also able to recognize that the special quality of his art lies in his deep observation of life around without passing judgement on it.
To serve as a prelude to the life Narayan depicts in his novels, an adequate knowledge of Narayan's life and social background has been provided. He belongs to that group of Tamil society which experienced social change as an apparent and compelling presence. The transformation of Indian life from tradition into modernity which Narayan felt in his family and around him has been used as the rich raw material in all his novels; from 'Swami & Friends' to 'The Painter of Signs'.

Narayan's fictional symbol of India and Indian life, is Malgudi. Hence he observes socio-economic changes in India and also Indian life in its multifarious aspects through happenings of his own creation in Malgudi of his imagination. To prove that Narayan is a novelist of Indian authenticity, the major and the more interesting aspects of Indian life which have inspired Narayan have been selected in this study.

Narayan succeeds in showing how a powerful sector of the Indian society around him is rooted in tradition (Savitri of 'The Dark Room', Krishna's mother in 'The English Teacher', Aunt in 'The Painter of Signs', Granny in 'Waiting for the Maham-a', Srinivas in 'Mr. Sampath', Nataraj in 'The Man-eater of Malgudi' are symbols of traditional Indian life). Malgudi has its own festivals (Navaratri is observed in Ramani's house; Malgudi schools close for the Dasara; Vinayaka Festival is celebrated in college hostels in Malgudi; Granny prepares elaborately for Yugadi - the New Year's Day). The Malgudians are spiritualistic in their attitude to life and are philosophical in their bent of mind. They are culturally conditioned in their behaviour. Malgudi has its own centres of cultural and spiritual regeneration (Krishna of 'The English Teacher' succeeds in achieving communion with the spirit of Susila). Thus Narayan brings out the special brand of Malgudi life: - its ability to speak with the liberated souls and its proven capacity to co-exist with the unavoidable materialism imported from the West.
Harayan's assessment of the role of religion as the chief social institution in Malgudi is studied in one chapter. He observes that Malgudi and its people have their faith in the eternal principle of 'Karma' (Margayya, Raju and Vasu - all suffer from self-inflicted evil); in 'fatalism' (Chandrana's mother, Savitri, Mari, Chandran and Srinivas - all recognise the pulls and pushes of fate); in 'Gods, Demons, Evil Spirits' (Jagan, Rosie and Susila - all pray to Gods; Ravi is exorcised upon to be freed from evil spirits; Sriram is afraid of ghosts). They are conscious of the soul and sin. Religious injunctions govern even their food habits. Thus Malgudians represent the core of Indian life. Like Indians these people are surrounded by belief in the auspiciousness or otherwise of things and look up to good and bad omens. Narayan is conscious of the undoubted, the unavoidable and the gradual modernisation of Malgudi. This modernisation is caused by the spread of liberal education and the knowledge people gather of what goes on elsewhere in the country and the world. (To Daisy, rebirth is a figment of imagination; Margayya towards the end of 'The Financial Expert' emphasises hard work and not fate for one's success in one's life; Raman locks up Aunt's Gods for the sake of Daisy; Srinivas occupies a house believed to be inhabited by a ghost and considers exorcism a silly practice)

To make the profile of Indian life he presents satisfying, Narayan examines the manner in which Malgudi, like any other growing town of India, influences its surrounding villages. He points out that, though the people of India have been giving up old ways of life in favour of the new ones, it is not hard to find in some who belong to the rural areas an urban outlook as many in the modernising Malgudi still maintain an outlook distinctly characteristic of our rural life. He is inspired by the rustic side of life which can be seen simultaneously in the developing Malgudi and its undeveloped rural surroundings. The life led by such people is one full of superstition (Sumati, Kamala and Swaminathan: Tailor Ranga;
Cartman Ranga; even Srinivas and Margayya are superstitious). Superstition itself fructifies in the sheltering care of illiteracy. It is at this juncture that religion comes into the picture making it too difficult to judge when faith is replaced by blind faith. In and around Malgudi, 'Samskaras' are adhered to and 'Ashramas' are kept by people. Narayan provides many opportunities for the amusement of the readers as his characters mostly follow these concepts only in their outer spirit. That is so because basically they are dreamy people afraid of certain things even in their dreams. Once their dreams are shattered they surrender to religion. But a more honest inwardness is always available because the quality of the faith of some is so pure and powerful that people designing to deceive them will consciously realise their sin and are reborn into new improved beings (Raju experiences this in 'The Guide'). Thus, with all its inherent weaknesses, life, in and around Malgudi, like life anywhere else in India, has an in-built strength.

Marriage in Malgudi, as an institution has undergone the same transformation which it has, in India. With the passage of time, marriage, the sacred bond it was understood to be, is seen to be simplified into a social contract with a legal sanction. Encouraged by the impact of education and Western thought, the Malgudians - men and women alike - sharply react to the established notions (Raman and Daisy prefer Gándharva marriage; Mali brings Grace without even marrying her; Chandran hates dowry; Marco marries a girl from the Dancing-girl caste). The unbiased artist in Narayan asserts and the picture of the Indian mind with its obedience to marital customs and beliefs, emerges. Effortlessly, Narayan provides an entertaining picture of this aspect of everyday Indian life which becomes all the more interesting because Narayan stands out of it.

Family life in urban and semi-urban places in India has certainly inspired Narayan. Through his fiction, one has
a first hand and artistic account of how the joint-family -
the most puzzling social institution of India to a foreigner's
eye - is being unwillingly replaced by the Western oriented
individual family (Srinivas lives in a joint-family. So is
Ravi's father. But by the time of 'The Financial Expert',
joint-family disintegrates. Jagan and Nataraj have individual
families). The spread of education with the attendant import
of rational thinking and the creation of an awareness of indi-
viduality have brought into severe questioning, the old ways
of life where religion and a blind obedience to it held sway
over the society. Though 'Dharma' still binds the two part-
ners in wedlock, each of them is educated in his duties and
responsibilities to the other, and family life thus becomes
meaningful. In Malgudi, authority of the elders is being
slowly liquidated. Though the young have the advantage of
enjoying economic independence it is interesting to see that
authority is not concentrated into their hands either, Malgu-
di so changes that the elders are forced to listen to their
sons and daughters for fear of the latter either defying or
deserting them. Together with that there is a perceptible
change in the values of life. Manners and morals alike are
remodelled and the young freely laugh at the old. It is inte-
resting that elders have the wisdom to adjust to the changing
times though inevitably. It is the virtue of Narayan's pen
that he is unaffected by either the defeat of the older gener-
ation or the triumph of the younger.

Though Narayan writes without any commitmen't, his
deep involvement with the problems of the people he is writing
about is unmistakable. In the Malgudi of his imagination, he
creates the word-picture of the society around him, not nece-
sarily the Tamil or Kannada society. One sees that in Malgu-
di women try to come out of the secondary place to which they
are relegated and for most of the part succeed in securing for
themselves a place of dignity. In a nut-shell, Narayan is
aware of the changing status of women in India, and mirrors it
in Malgudi. But he takes care to stand at a safe distance so that he can have an overall view of the problem without voicing any personal say in the matter. While quietly noticing the struggle the Indian woman undergoes he seems to feel that women deserve a treatment better than the one most of them get most of the time though he never styles himself as the liberator of womanhood.

It is thus that one finds in his novels the common lot of most of the lower middle-class and lower class women, punctuated by clashes between husband and wife mostly resulting in tormentation to the latter, sometimes reaching the extremity of a temporary or permanent estrangement between the two (Savitri runs away from 'The Dark Room'). That is a good sign because that makes the women realise their debased position and the necessity to revolt against it. (Raju's mother wonders at Rosie's versatility)

There is a hint in his novels that the days of Savitri are over. Not many women in India now allow themselves to be shut in the dark room. That is so because no more is the Hindu society rigid and no more is the Indian woman the same old helpless creature. Married women can now hope to lead a life of dignity and independence, as Rosie does, even when they are deserted by their husbands.

Modern scientific thought has clearly demonstrated that inferiority of women is socially imposed. Naturally, the modern woman in India is no longer prepared to accept the code of behaviour which man has prescribed for her with an eye on his own advantage. Narayan's Malgudians of the present generation—Susila, Rosie and Daisy—feel so and even men—Raju and Sampath—support their point of view.

It should also be noted that Narayan is aware of the impact of the occidental civilisation on Malgudi which, along with the other development, has helped assess the true worth of women and, where necessary, force men to adjust to it (Daisy would never allow herself to be inspected as a bride; Dr. Pal played cards with Balu's wife, Brinda).
Narayan's first concern in fiction is objective authenticity. So there is no preaching that the husband is God or that women should be bold enough to threaten their husbands. His is just the delineation of the sort of thing that happens in any common Indian household.

All the novels of Narayan are not set at a single point of time. Though outwardly casual, he is inspired by various profiles of Indian life. Hence, the advent of the British rule and the consequent spread of Christianity which have left an indelible impress on Indian life cannot but tempt him. (Joseph born near Mangal is converted to Christianity through some mission; Daisy was fitted for dedicated social service by a missionary. In 'Swami & Friends', one gets an idea of the suffering of a non-Christian boy). It is important to note that Narayan does not aim at writing a political novel. One of the aspects of life of people is political, and it is an important one in India which woke up to freedom after an exemplary struggle without beating any particular political drum. Narayan does the creditable job of bringing home for the benefit of his readers the growth of nationalism in India more particularly through 'Swami & Friends' and 'Waiting for the Mahatma'.

A novel such as Narayan's is the outcome of shaping into artistic design the social material that is changing in his presence. He can hardly ignore the impact of Gandhiji's teaching and personality on Indian life. Naturally, repeated references to the words and thoughts of Gandhiji find a place in his 'Mr. Sampath', 'Waiting for the Mahatma', 'The Vendor of Sweets' and 'The Painter of Signs'.

Through Malgudi and its people Narayan presents the social transformation, political awakening and the cultural regeneration that the Mahatma tried to achieve in India. This Narayan does with the help of amusing but meaningful incidents which happen in his fictional city. Gandhiji is sketched by Narayan as a humane being acting upon the minds and hearts of
ordinary citizens like Sriram and Bharati and spending his time with them motivated by his pressing compassion for the neglected sections of our society. Gandhiji's partiality to communal harmony together with his principles of eclecticism and non-violence are projected by Narayan. To any reader who has an insight into historical facts about Gandhiji, there would be a picturesque confirmation of this historical information in Narayan's 'Waiting for the Mahatma'.

In his times, the Mahatma saw that a gap was developing between the westernised Indian elite and the masses of India. The latter were untouched by the winds of social change. Khadi gains the same popularity in Malgudi as it did in India and reduces the estrangement between the two sections of the Indian society to the extent it could.

In Malgudi too there are exceptions. Narayan uses the opportunity through 'Waiting for the Mahatma' and 'The Vendor of Sweets' to point out that India does not lack people who either could not or could not care to understand Gandhian thought and philosophy.

Narayan uses Malgudi as the window through which he is able to observe socio-economic changes in India which serve as the fascinating raw-material for his fiction. Since his eyes are more of a historian and a scientist, one does not smell any commitment in his novels. The co-existence of the good and the bad in Indian society attract Narayan equally so that a photographic representation of the Indian society is visible in his fiction.

It is thus that Narayan expresses a sense of gratitude towards the beneficial effects of the British rule: The spread of literacy and education vertically as well as horizontally; the consequent literary awakening and authorship; the scientific outlook which brings into question established notions and conventions — all these are seen with the same force in Malgudi as they are in India (Prof. Brown of Albert Mission College, Malgudi, inspires people to study English literature; even Raman, the Painter, makes a lot of reading;
Susila reads Tamil classics and Sanskrit texts; Bharati can speak Hindi fluently. Malgudi has the Head Master making up stories for children and Mohan, the Poet. Dr. Pal writes on 'Domestic Harmony' and Marco writes a book on the cave-paintings of Malgudi. Mr. Noble, an Englishman, gets his lessons in astrology from Jagan's father. Vasu demonstrates his rational thinking and shocks the traditional Nataraj.

Malgudi reflects the same expansion in the educational efforts which took place in India during and after the British rule. Naturally there is the resulting increase of professional interest in Malgudi. Besides is seen the virtue of betterment of the quality of work and also of dedication towards one's profession. Like India Malgudi restlessly keeps pace with progress and in the bargain gets linked with the world. It is thus that one finds that Narayan is guided by a nice sense of artistic balance in his picturisation of the British rule in India.

The advent of the British rule in Malgudi brings the wind of change and a new urban culture starts breathing in the area. The unmistakable growth of Malgudi like that of any other Indian city focusses Narayan's attention on the evils of urbanisation, viz., the disturbed personal relationship (the landlord of Srinivas is unhappy because he has lost all neighbourliness); life's mechanical struggles; the problems of housing and slums and the commencement of 'foot-path life' (Keelacheri is Malgudi's slum). Villages in the vicinity of Malgudi get closer to the growing city and the ill-fed and ill-educated sections of the rural areas are lured by the glitter of city life, and, in their ambition to share the same often contribute to crime (Mari, the locksmith, maintained himself with his side occupation - burglary).

Narayan recognises that the increasing awareness of literacy is another soothing influence of the British rule but sadly enough literacy has seldom been elevated to the level of education notwithstanding the large number of schools and
colleges because they send out year after year students like Swami, Chandran and Jagan and Vasu who make either their own or others' future hopeless. What else could one expect from an educational system in which there are plenty of Ebenezars and Gajapathis? Students who step into life without any academic equipment build dreams of happy life and, when they are disillusioned, convert themselves into 'social blacksheep'. Adulteration, black marketing, hoarding—all these become the order of the day in Malgudi as they have been in India.

Since Narayan knows that nobody can prevent Malgudi from growing, his speciality consists in neither violently opposing social change nor hailing it as a millennium come. In this sense his attitude is that of a social scientist. That with his touch what would have been dry material in the hands of a social scientist or economist blooms into a thoroughly readable fiction, is Narayan's excellence. He is serving the cause of literary ambassadorship too by painting the changing India for its better understanding by those abroad.

Narayan's constant search for material for his fiction in the society around him brings him face to face with the part played by the caste system and the transformation of castes into economic classes in India. His Malgudi which, like any other city of India, has been forced to change with the arrival of industrialisation and urbanisation also experiences the onset of the new wave of thinking on the age-old caste system. The novelist does not forget the services of Gandhiji, who, by word of mouth and example, melted the hearts of the higher-ups in society towards their less fortunate brethren. The ideas of 'clean' and 'unclean' and the part that the rigid caste system played in matrimonial matters till recently cannot escape him. But Narayan seems to be pained to note that most of the educated Indians often end up with only lip-service to casteless and conventionless society (Marco of 'The Guide' is a character in point). Yet we see in Malgudi novels a definite social change in that, both in place of and side by side castes, the modern economic classes are growing
up. It is thus that one comes across the fact that economic concepts are slowly replacing religious concepts as centres of individuals' life. Narayan's Malgudi indicates the slow but sure transformation of the self-contained rigid castes into modern mobile industrial classes. Neither birth nor man's past are important in the determination of one's class in society. Margayya is pleasantly surprised to note that in the face of his achievement as the financial expert and the riches he has been able to amass the pricking truth that he belonged to the corpse-bearers' caste has been swept off its feet; no wonder, horoscopes of girls for Balu stream in.

Based on his own experience and on that of others regarding the turn of the tide against the Brahmins in the thirties in India, Narayan records it in his fiction. As job opportunities for Brahmins began to dwindle, they began to scatter in all types of occupations and professions. Even this happens in Malgudi - the fictional symbol of India (In the Brahmin Street of Sukkur one can see Brahmins as landlords, teachers, police inspectors and village accountants). Finally a few Malgudi characters are ready to then reject the social evil called caste and to accept the equality of human beings (Chandran could not marry a girl of his own caste whom he liked. But Mall brings Grace home without even marrying her. Raju considers out-modeed Rosie's inferiority complex ... that she belonged to the class of temple-dancers). Without being prejudiced with such social change in India, Narayan hints its arrival in Malgudi. This mainly constitutes his artistic dynamism.

The entire Indian nation rose as one man to achieve independence in response to the electrifying leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. In most of our cities public property was destroyed as an expression of anger against the British rule. Through the Malgudi kaleidoscope Narayan views what happened in the Indian cities then (He describes the reaction of the mob to the arrest of Gauri Sankar, a political worker of Bombay, in his 'Swami & Friends').
Narayan also shows that our semi-urban and rural areas have been made to be aware of Gandhiji's love towards communal harmony. All the same, social disharmony and faction fights—like the one between Velan's family and others—are still seen in all corners of the country. One reason for this social unrest could be people like Jagan and Sriram who are misguided in their youth and do not hesitate to cover their personal failures in the shelter of participation in the freedom struggle and of joining Gandhi. However the optimistic artist in Narayan does register the examples of certain Malgudi youth—Srinivas, Raman and Daisy—who develop a perspective of life worthy of appreciation.

Narayan's response to the changing Indian life is quite becoming of an artist whose unending source of inspiration is human life. The good and the bad in the modernising society of India attract Narayan equally. No wonder, he observes how the social liabilities, viz., beggary, alcohol and prostitution corrode the otherwise placid life of Malgudi. Being a party to the Indian life he paints, Narayan appears to sympathise with the unfortunate state of the Indian society owing to the presence of these social maladies (Margayya knew people collected money from dead bodies; the Malgudi sweepers, Mari and Raju—all are addicted to alcohol; Nataraj wondered how even his Malgudi could cater prostitutes to suit the taste of Vasu).

It is heartening to read in the novels of Narayan that the younger generation in India respect dignity of labour and self-sustained living but their critical views on beggary are not unaccompanied by the popularisation of the use of alcohol despite hindrances; the occasional cropping up of extra-marital relations—as between Rosie and Raju; Mali and Grace; Raman and Daisy. Malgudi like India preserves what in the past was a status symbol—prostitution—and Padma and Rangi represent the oldest of the professions.

The authenticity of Malgudi comes from its being a representative town of whatever is happening all over the
country. During the course of its growth Malgudi gets linked up with the nearby villages and social mobility is achieved. People of surrounding villages anticipate a better scope for their activities in Malgudi and crave to move there. Malgudi is connected with its surroundings by buses and rail. The City is also connected to Trichinopoly and Madras. But as elsewhere in India, so in Malgudi railway services are inadequate and a third-class railway compartment that the Malgudians use is the same as it was till recently in our country. Even with this handicap, Malgudi develops into a centre of tourist attraction taking full advantage of its scenic spots and relics. Similarly the entire Malgudi District enjoys postal services which is the only link with the world for some mountain villages. Narayan throws a mild comment about the inadequacy of postal service in rural India.

In Malgudi associations formed in the Albert Mission College bring out journals to mould public opinion about vital social, economic and political issues. The spread of literacy which has made this possible makes youngsters like Srinivas to edit journals and Chandran to distribute them. The part that journals and newspapers play in improving people's knowledge on current affairs as also in encouraging creative writing has been well exemplified by Raman, Gupta and Sen and Mohan, the poet.

Another factor that contributes to the modernisation and growth of Malgudi is the cinema and film production. If on the one hand it is a source of entertainment, on the other, it casts its evil effects on the otherwise innocent society of Malgudi. With persons from Northern India - Sohanlal and Sampath - entering this field needing heavy investment Malgudi loses whatever typical Southern label it has and becomes the prototype of any Indian city on the march. For a change, Narayan appears to satirise the common Indian film production made possible by Malgudi's 'Sunrise Pictures', which starts the rot.
Malgudi slowly develops in the business field too. The constitutional right to move to any part of India and earn one's honest bread in the way one likes is being enjoyed by Narayan's characters. Madamalal, Sohanlal, Sampath, 'Anand Bhavan' Sait—all these enter Malgudi from the north introducing their language and business acumen to Malgudi. Vasu of Junagadh demonstrates his capacity for sole proprietorship. Narayan's Malgudians initially find Hindi difficult. But it is Bapuji who brings Hindi to the place and people there are carried away by his love also for sweet Tamil. Malgudi becomes a symbol for India and its cultural values when, finally, it sheds its reservations about language; Malgudians respect Hindi and the people from the north learn Tamil.

Through the Malgudi novels one comes to know of Narayan's observation of the evolution of civic consciousness in India. Men and women of Malgudi, with the help of their education are made to be aware of their rights, which are safeguarded through acts and laws but the familiar feature of laws being either avoided or evaded is established through the acts of Margayya, Raju, Jagan etc. and there is no lack of 'adjournment lawyers' demonstrating their capacity to interpret laws.

It has been the concern of Narayan to have an artistic exposition of the totality of Indian life as lived by the people representing Indians, in the growing riverside Malgudi and its surroundings created by him. He is aware that the Indian populace which is distributed into various economic classes, has as one of its aspects of life, the economic life. It could be seen through all the novels of Narayan that he is as deeply interested in the lives of the people he writes about as an economist is. Malgudi which has marched a long way from the days of the war economy to those of the present day planned economy has naturally become unrecognisable to the eyes of the older generation. The novelist seems to point out that the city and the surroundings grow, compelled by the unavoidable law of change brought about by all kinds of influences—those of the rest of India or of those abroad. The
creator of Malgudi is however aware that it is fiction that he is creating and not a treatise on economics. This response to social change shows that Narayan cannot be at his best as a writer unless he uses the totality of life around and also his sincerity to show the real India to his readers. In his novels one thus comes across that economic thinking and those economic activities which one meets in the ordinary business of life lived by the people of India. Though the novelist involves himself deeply with the lives of the people there is a total absence of preaching. We have only a catalogue of what every one of us sees around him: the stark poverty; agricultural philosophy and practice; business and entrepreneurship as a slow but sure substitute for agriculture; the problems of unemployment and of labour; the need for savings; the tricks of tax evasion; the rising prices and planning; and an awareness of the standard of living through cutting down our numbers (Aziz, the college peon, begs for Chandran's coat; Narayan's older characters look upon Sarayu as a blessing for their agriculture; Chandran is advised to take up business; job-hunting is still on in Malgudi and Chandran's friend Ramu goes to Bombay in search of job; Krishna's mother, Susila and Granny are conscious of the value of savings; Raju helps Rosie to avoid super-tax and income-tax; Daisy wages a crusade against our rising numbers).

A careful examination of the novels of Narayan leads one to the conclusion that the urban middle-class on which he outwardly focusses is merely used as a peep-hole to watch the entire social life in its dynamic transformation.

Though Narayan asserts that Malgudi has been able to develop native entrepreneurs, he takes care to make the word-picture of India authentically artistic by showing that people like Jagan and Vasu with their sound business habits enjoy a decent standard of living whereas those like Nataraj with their unbusiness like habits are laughed at. To save themselves from the malpractices of businessmen, co-operative organisations are encouraged. Malgudi's Land Mortgage Bank is...
misused by the peasants in and around Malgudi under instigation from money lenders like Margayya. This is just the thing that is happening in India with regard to the co-operative movements.

In our country education is tied up with status. Neither physical labour nor business or investment habits satisfy the educated. While entrepreneurs from outside build up industries in Malgudi this little class considers job-seeking as its only avocation. This has raised the bugaboo of unemployment. No wonder, growing Malgudi suffers the consequences.

As life becomes a real struggle in Malgudi, Narayan's men and women realize the need for savings. It is interesting to note that the present generation is being slowly aware of its responsibility towards the dependents in the family. A provision for their old age is thought to be a must. Naturally one finds Krishna, the English Teacher, his in-laws and Susila; the grand fathers of Balu—all think in this vein.

In his latest novel, *The Painter of Signs*, Narayan performs the befitting duty of drawing the attention of his countrymen to the fact that our increasing incomes through our planned efforts have been in vain owing to our rising population. Narayan's novel has a prophetic air about it in that he could warn us about it long before the problem took alarming proportions. No socially conscious Indo-English novelist can either ignore or neglect this phenomenon. Much less Narayan whose primary aim as an artist is to present changing India and changing Indian life through his Malgudi stories. That the awareness is growing about population explosion in India even among women and that at least a few of them are rising to the occasion is amply and conclusively borne out by the character of Daisy.

It should be clearly noted that Narayan's approach to the Indian family planning effort is not one of a satirist. Till recently Indians favoured large families as a result of
the strange unscientific notions which they held taking recourse to convenient interpretations of the Shastras and blind beliefs spread by people like the 'temple-seer' created by Narayan. Partly out of amusement for this pitiable state of affairs and partly out of his earnestness to do what he can to educate public opinion on this burning problem, emerges the picture of the over crowded Malgudi and its surroundings. However it is delightful to read that the people of Malgudi-like those of India-realise that population control is both a national concern and an individual duty.

Narayan is comically critical of our society which he images in his fiction. The last pattern of life which he observes in the kaleidoscope of Malgudi is the growth of political and public life in India. With his sense of detached and unbiased amusement he records the passive municipal administration; the activities of the politician, active before and during the election; the mounting inefficiency; the proverbial red-tapism; the corrupt officials; the misuse of public property—all of which make the honest and conscientious citizen to lose hope for the future and faith in the democratic set up of the country and its leadership (Malgudi has earned notoriety for its municipal affairs. One example could be the Anderson Lane which the Municipality forgot; Gangu hoped to be a legislator; Natesh, the Municipal Chairman, made elaborate preparations to show himself a Gandhian; Margayya knew that the clerks of the Malgudi Co-op. Bank were corrupt).

It is amusing that the Malgudi municipality represents most of the municipalities scattered throughout the country judged by its administration and services. Malgudi's stigma; 'The Sweepers' Colony', receives thorough municipal care only because Gandhiji pays a visit to Malgudi! One could have an idea also of the state of public sanitation by reading what happens in the Lawley Extension which almost reaches the fields. It is in an unauthorisedly misused latrines that Susila gets infected and bids good bye to this world.
In Malgudi, as in India, social service is just a prelude to bagging or begging votes. That is why Sastri is determined to warn the prospective candidate about the ever-stinking gutter near the printery of Nataraj. But as everywhere in India, in Malgudi too, noise culture develops; speeches become rituals carelessly gone through both by the listener and the speaker. Malgudi’s District Judge and its District Board President deliver speeches which are either unsuitable for the occasion or irresponsible.

It has now been observed that Narayan has imaged in his novels the various aspects of Indian life. There is no room for the guess that he presents only the South Indian life in his fiction. The fact that Narayan is not only aware of the totality of Indian life, but that he is also inspired by it persuades him to treat the same as an artist. He does it for the benefit and aesthetic satisfaction of whoever reads it.

The source of Narayan’s inspiration, in the main, is life led by Indians around him in South India. As an artist deeply involved with the problems of his countrymen around he is compelled to create a place in which he can picture that life. That is Malgudi. To represent the dynamic Indian life Narayan has succeeded in the creation of characters who need not be labelled 'South Indians' or 'Kannadigas' because they are representatives of the people of India. It appears better to view South Indian life and Indian life as not mutually exclusive. Breathing characters belonging to both the sexes who can be classified into all possible classes socially and economically live their life in Malgudi. It is thus that Narayan absorbs the changing social material, and, aided by the quality of his artistic dynamism shapes that material into an artistic design which is at once entertaining and educative. The dynamic Indian life as lived by the people of a dynamic Indian city created by him, is painted in words, from within, he being a party to it.
Narayan's fiction has relevance and utility both for the Indian as also for the foreigner. It is a source of instruction about India for the one; it is certainly an authentic catalogue of Indian life for the other. The fact that Narayan's aim might not be fully fruitful from the point of view of certain foreign readers owing to their inherent and unavoidable handicap in understanding Indian life does not, in any way, deprive Narayan of the unique place he occupies by virtue of what he does or the worth of his fiction.

Had Narayan reproduced a known place in India in his novels he would not have succeeded in depicting all the aspects of Indian life there. Thus Narayan's Malgudi, though existing nowhere, does exist everywhere. The essence of Indian life and India itself has inspired Narayan so much that he has deliberately ignored minute regional variations in the pattern of life of Indians in his Malgudi which is the symbol of the flow of Indian life. It is thus that the life led by the Malgudians mirrors life lived by some Indians all the time; all Indians some time; some Indians some time and all Indians all the time. In essence, life in Malgudi is the many-sided dynamic life of India itself. Since life in India is a flow, a novelist who responds to the changing profiles of Indian life and makes them the central point of his fiction does not pause to think whether his themes belong to the past or present Indian life. For instance, a novel bringing out the impact of Gandhi or Gandhism on India need not necessarily be written in 1948. Tradition at no point in Indian life can be divorced from modernity and it is Narayan's purpose to see how comedy results when both meet.

It is important to note that Narayan is not a committed artist. He does not aim to make his fiction a tool for social reformation. With the artist's approach to social change that he has developed one can observe that Narayan refuses to take sides. He neither violently opposes social change nor hails it as a millenium come. Serious satire as a weapon
directed to social correction is absent in Narayan; all along he projects himself as an observer; the consequent irony is so compelling that it is mistaken for satire by some readers. His is only an artistic catalogue of life around for the benefit of his countrymen and those abroad. All the same as a conscientious citizen of his country he does sympathise, though quietly, with the young and the old and there are occasions during the comic criticism of the Indian society when angry remarks are made by him.

It is time therefore that we labelled Narayan as an Indian novelist of Indian authenticity seeing dispassionately the many sided and ever changing life of India, through his artistic kaleidoscope called Malgudi which is the fictional symbol of changing India and the changing Indian life, and doing this commendable work for the benefit of both his countrymen and foreigners.