CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION
The goals of this research project were to study the idea of the nation in R.K. Narayan's work, and, more importantly, to determine the role it plays in serving the postcolonial agenda of destabilizing the power of Eurocentric literary discourse and of asserting the marginalized narrative practices as a counter-discursive strategy. The special frames of reference for this study were R.K. Narayan's novels with a historical division—Narayan's pre-independence novels and Narayan's post-independence novels. By closely examining the texts, the nature of nationhood in each of them was explored, and how the idea of nation helps these texts function as nationalistic discourses was identified.

R. K. Narayan reflects the Indian spirit and thought in his works. His fiction imbibes the quintessence of Indian nationalism in general and idea of nation in particular. However, Narayan, an unassuming and unpretentious writer, does not burden his fiction with pedantic theoretical discourses. In spite of all theoretical under-currents in his novels, Narayan does not treat his fiction as a means of social, political or religious propaganda. His fictional works are a simplistic, yet realistic projection of life. An amateur, unobservant reader of Narayan may often be lured by the obvious simplicity of the thematic concerns of his fiction which are marked by his distinctive comic narrative mode. The ordinary commonalities of the Malgudian life depicted by Narayan and the simplicity of thematic concerns give a non-serious tone to his fiction. However, there is a profound undercurrent of theoretical discourse in his fiction, inter-related with disciplines of religion and ethics paving the way for a broad concept of nation and nationhood.
Functioning as a socio-cultural discourse, the contemporary Indian nationalist novel calls attention to the linguistic and narrative structure, and also to its fictionality, in order to examine the problematic relationship between fiction and reality. So, Narayan employs self-reflexive narrative in his novels. This mode of narrativization has been inspired by the ancient narrative practices of marginalized cultures such as those of India. Self-reflexive narrative mainly problematizes the traditional notion of objective, knowable reality, one that can be accurately reflected through the power of language. This narrative treats reality as a construct and language as an independent signifying system rather than a medium for communicating a given reality. Fictionality, rather than fiction itself, forms the main action in these narratives. In captivating Indian oral narratives as replicas for writing his novels, and then restructuring them from existing standpoints, Narayan is performing a drastic act. He is reorganizing the novel, which is essentially a Western middle-class realist art form concerned with sketching the destiny of an individual character through a firmly organized plot. Narayan recreates this in the shape of the Hindu epics and puranas, which are digressive and multi-faceted symbolic narratives that move easily between the natural and the supernatural giving priorities to the community and its values over and above the individual. In other words, the act of storytelling pre-dominates the story itself, and this construction of fiction provides a useful model for re-constructing nation by recapturing the past which again intermingles with the present.

The thesis tries to identify the principles underlying the idea of nation and nationalism, and also the goals that Narayan’s fictional world is trying to achieve
through the use of this special theory. This theory of discourse, though Eurocentric in origin, resists the colonialist representation of India, and offers alternative representations with a glorification of the past. National narratives—or the stories that nations tell to connect their past, present and future—are powerful and necessary tools in shaping national identity. Within such narratives, the 'nation' as a concept may often appear to rely heavily on an essentialised narrative that seeks to homogenize diversity as a strand of coherent unity.

The fictional world of Narayan has a strong sense of both continuity and disruption. Interrupting the continuum of the past and the present involves reclaiming rather than rejecting tradition. In his novels, identity for the central protagonist is a matter of fantasy arising from the sense of dispossession. Homi Bhabha uses the phrase “in-between space” (quoted in Huddart 160) or “time lag” (quoted in Huddart 90) which means that those who have been previously marginalized or silenced enter before they find their new identities. It is an aspect of the novels written by Narayan in which he explores the nature of nationhood and national identity. Nationalism, initially finding expression in convert communities, organizations and activities, became a homogenizing discourse to which other subject identities based on class, gender, sexuality or race were subordinated. Identity is a construct, on the one hand based on differences and on the other it is a narrative. It represents memories: how does a community represent itself; how do they tell their own story. A nation is a product of a historical narrative which reflects the voice of the dominant group. Nationalism can be seen as an idealized view of the past, stemming from the legacy of Indian struggle for Independence from the dominant colonial rule.
This study finds that all the novels of R.K. Narayan discussed here draw attention to their nationalistic theme, implicitly or explicitly. All these novels, though written both in a European form (novel) and in a European language (English), resist the totalizing Eurocentric, novel tradition, and validate cultural and national experiences of pre-independence and post-independence India. Narayan has deliberately endeavoured to Indianise the Western novel by transferring the traditions of linear narration upon the symbolical and ethical framework of the ancient Hindu narratives. It extends the significance of the novels beyond their immediate small-town context as well as Hindu orientation. Through this amalgamation of complementary literary traditions, Narayan sought to create a new literary tradition, that of the Indian novel. Frederic Jameson’s well known thesis is that ‘third world’ novelists ‘narrate the nation’, that is, write national allegories (unlike their western counterparts who are obsessively solipsistic). In this sense, Narayan’s fictional world is an allegory of India’s journey from the pre-colonial era to colonization to postcolonial nationhood. Here, Narayan is engaged in representing various issues of cultural, political, and national significance through his writing. And studied together, his fictional world throw a light on the development of his idea of nation.

However, the idea of nation employed in the novels of each of the periods (pre-independence and post-independence), vary a great deal. Their use of the idea of nation shows a clear progression. In the novels written before Independence R.K. Narayan remains pre-occupied with the treatment of social and national issues like nationalism, traditional social norms, typical Indian attitude to family life, sound familial relationship, beliefs on other worldly matters, feminism, faulty education-
system, social evils like dowry system and caste system, east-west encounter, degeneration of values, rural-urban conflict and freedom struggle. Here, Narayan presents a nation in transition having the conflicting issues like tradition and modernity, east and west with a clear progression in his post-Independence novels.

Narayan’s post-independence novels delineate the experience of the colonial age and dilemmas of post-independent realities. They have also explored the relationship between Oriental and Occidental people and cultures. Fictional reworking of mythology and history has also been rediscovered by him in this period. National identity and national boundary occupy the narrative in most of them. Emerging national issues like feminine sensibility, Gandhism, frequent use of global situations and characters, etc. are found present in his novels written after Independence.

For a categorical summarization of Narayan’s idea of nation, some nationalistic features that are investigated in Narayan’s novels like—spiritualism, mythical technique, classicism, language issue, Indian setting and background, rise of industrialization and print-capitalism, Indian philosophy, east-west encounter, subaltern and women’s issues and Gandhism are discussed here.

Spiritualism is an essential factor to determine a nation. Ernest Renan opines that “a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle” (quoted in Das 36). In India, the spiritual motives pre-dominate life of the individual. Narayan reveals this message in his fiction through the presentation of spiritual transformation of his characters such as Raju, the guide, Raja, the tiger, Jagan, the sweet vendor and Margayya, and the financial expert. Their journey from materialism to spiritualism shows Narayan’s predicament in a traditional India, a nation with a glorious spiritual past.
Again, Renan says that two things, which are really one, constitute this soul and spiritual principle that determines a nation. One is in the past, the other, the present. One is the possession in common of a rich trove of memories; the other is actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to continue to value the undivided, shared heritage. This is reflected in Narayan’s conscious use of the mythical technique in his novels by juxtaposing them with the facts of modern life, and in this way he brings out the similarities and contrasts between the past and the present. In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, Narayan has used the Bhasmasura Myth as a conscious technique, the mythical technique, the purpose being to stress the self-destruction of Vasu, to enrich the texture of the novel and to link it up with the Indian Classical tradition. Vasu’s sacrifice is necessary for the establishment of order and it satisfies Renan’s belief that a nation is defined as the “culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice and devotion” (quoted in Das 36). In *The Painter of Signs* Narayan illustrates the mythology of Santanu and Ganga. Similarly, in *Grandmother’s Tale* the author uses the famous Satyavan—Savitri mythology. Moreover, the religious nuance of the Indian myth is part of Narayan’s grip on reality, of his particular view of human life and his individual way of placing and ordering human feelings and experiences. Moreover, Narayan has presented the Bhasmasura and the Mahishasura myths in a comic mode and in the contemporary Indian setting, so as to illustrate the universal moral relevance of those older stories. In the process, the novels are simultaneously realistic and fable-like, illustrating that blend of the mythological and the naturalistic which is the hallmark of the narrative tradition of the Hindu epics and puranas. It is in
fact, no mistake that the content of national narratives overwhelmingly draws upon mythological stories of great cultural antiquity.

A close examination of Narayan’s novels from nationalistic point of view introduces one to various classical systems that originated in India some three thousand years ago. The impact of Vedic thoughts as well as of other Hindu religious scriptures is rampant in R.K. Narayan’s works. While writing Narayan tries to maintain the old traditional values of life prescribed by the ancient Indian culture and embodied in Indian epics, ‘Shastras’, ‘Puranas’, myths and mythologies. He delineates his notions of traditionalism through the middle class life of Malgudi, an imaginary small town in South India, which forms the background to all his novels. In his novels Narayan tries to show that success and happiness in life lie in the acceptance of the Shastras and the Vedic values. The main purpose of human life has been suggested as a journey in pursuit of self-identify or liberation from the miseries of life.

Narayan points out that the Indian epics, Upanishads and Puranas are the depositors of ancient values of life and moral codes of conduct. The deep knowledge of Vedas was uttered by Indian sages, seers and saints who were divinely inspired and blessed. For leading an organized and ideal life they are commonly accepted even today. These epics and Puranas have been the sources of moral teachings to common man and of inspiration to the creative writers. Narayan, in his novels, expresses that the values of life sermonized in our scriptures are still relevant to human life in the present context. The impact of Vedas becomes more prominent in Narayan’s repeated allusions to myths, mythologies, the Puranas and epics in his novels. The purpose
behind the application of allusions is to show the conflict between good and evil.

Narayan retells the Indian epics and Puranas. He has the ability to make Hindu legends come alive for contemporary readers. He brings Rama and Ravana to human proportions and makes the epics speak to the readers. Narayan uses contemporary realities to describe the Indian myths. From Mr. Sampath onwards, it is the Indian mythological tradition that punctuates contemporary realities in Narayan's narratives.

Narayan uses many commonly used Hindi and Indian words in his novels. This makes Hindi and Indian words known to those who do not know Hindi and other Indian languages, but are reading Narayan's works regularly. His fondness for India and Indian values lead him to deliberately and freely use the words of Indian origin. One seems to detect the contradiction between Narayan's mastery of the English language and his deep loyalty to the Indian culture and language, and specifically to the Hindu culture. The contradiction is far more apparent than real, for he himself would reconcile them by arguing that the English language and the Hindu religion are the two unitary factors in modern Indian culture. Myths from ancient culture and religion provide a content for traditions and literatures in many languages, and English provides the common speech by which the multilingual concourse of Indians can understand each other and even each other's vernacular literatures, for without it the writing of Dravidian-speaking Tamils would be incomprehensible to the Hindi or Bengali speakers of northern and eastern India, and vice versa. So, English remains the lingua franca in a multilingual nation like India and the concept of Indian English novel fulfills the need for a national literature to emerge within a strong diversity. According to Anderson, language is the main ingredient in the mixture that glues a
and forms a “nation” together and creates group consciousness. It is language that tells history, evokes images and produces social cohesion. However, the same language tool can be used to draw distinct lines between those who “historically” belong to the nations and those who are outsiders and intruders.

An important feature of all novels of Narayan is the setting and the locale. All his novels are located in the imaginary town of Malgudi, known for its past history, a symbol of antiquity. Here Lord Rama made the river Saryu flow by pulling an arrow from his quiver and scratching a line on the sand. It is the land where Gautam Buddha preached the sermon of compassion, Sankara highlighted the Vedantic philosophy, Christian missionaries advocated their religion, Mahatma Gandhi preached his doctrines of truth and non-violence. So, Malgudi is not a modern fashionable town, but a town having moorings in the mythic, historic past of the country and is a place that provides an ideal setting or locale for the intellectual, philosophical, religious, ethical and moral activities of his characters. Malgudi is a metonymy for India. Narayan’s novels, taken as a whole, deal with a fluid and fractured world. If the early novels are located in a traditional world the later works delineate an unsettled India. Again, Malgudi is a multifaceted and transitional site, an interface between older conceptions of authentic Indianness and contemporary views that stress the ubiquity and inescapability of change in the face of modernity. It argues that Malgudi is far more than a physical locus, viewing it as an episteme that incorporates numerous ways of perceiving India—social, spiritual, mythological and psychological among them. This fore-grounding in the ancient past of India through the imaginary town of Malgudi accrues to Narayan’s novels a credibility or authenticity. It justifies
Anderson’s conception of the nation as one of a community that is socially-constructed, or “imagined” into being.

In Narayan’s novels it is seen that characters at various levels of reality and circumstances reiterate or critique the Indian philosophical thought, religion, moral or social code. Philosophy in the Indian context is not confined to the dissemination of intellectual knowledge and wisdom only. The homocentricism and centrality of man is the perennial theme of Indian philosophy and it has been rightly averred that Indian philosophy is not merely a view of life but it is also a way of life. Thus, for the protagonists, namely, Srinivas, Nataraj and Nagaraj in his respective novels Mr. Sampath, The Man-Eater of Malgudi and The World of Nagaraj philosophy is operative in their lives as a way of life. These characters have largely constructed their philosophy of life from the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagawad Gita and the two Indian epics, though the interpretation and the subsequent implementation of philosophy varies as per the personal needs, familial or social conditions as well as the power of comprehension and assimilation of his characters and protagonists. R. K. Narayan in his novel, A Tiger for Malgudi, attempts to accentuate the philosophical practicalities of Hinduism and their significance to day to day life. The central concern of the novel is to define how the individual, chained by his aberration, works within a basis established by the Hindu concepts of dharma and karma. Here we discover the apparent inferences to the Hindu philosophy as exemplified in The Bhagavad Gita. The characters of the Master, the Captain and Raja, the tiger stand for sattva, rajas and tamo gunas and Raja himself progresses from one guna to the other by which he becomes a Sattvic at the end. Here, Narayan associates Hindu mysticism
with human ridiculousness through the eyes of a tiger finding the human world too cruel and mysterious. But above all, the novel, like other Malgudi novels, delineates the cultural tradition of Hindu society which is a recurrent motif of Narayan’s idea of a spiritual nation.

Theorists like Ernest Gellner place greater emphasis on the development of industrial society as a driving force behind the rise of nations and nationalism. The development of nationalism is also facilitated by the changing structure of the state—from Agricultural to Industrial. After reading Narayan’s novels, it is found that his Malgudi is a replica of post-colonial India giving priority on industrialization. In Malgudi, there are many banks and industries. There is Engladia Banking Corporation in *Mr. Sampath* with Edward Shilling, a tough man, as its manager. There is a branch of Engladia Insurance Co., for which Ramani is the local manager in *The Dark Room*. The Central Cooperative Land Mortgage Bank is introduced in *The Financial Expert*, while in *The Waiting for the Mahatma* we come across a Fund Office from where Sriram’s grandmother gets regular payment. Mills, in and around Malgudi, reveal the industrial growth of the town. While *Swami and Friends* introduces mill managers Mr Hentel and Pelty, *The Bachelor of Arts* presents two weaving mills and a Mill Road. Motor-cars, taxis and taxi-drivers can also be found here. In *Swami and Friends*, Swami goes to the club in the car of his father’s friend. In *The Dark Room*, Ramani has a car; in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, Vasu owns a jeep. Gaffur the taxi-driver is a popular person who figures in *The Guide, The Vendor of Sweets* and *The Talkative Man*. *The Talkative Man* shows the growing use of cars and auto-rickshaws, and in this novel Dr. Rann is seen always engaging a taxi whenever
he wishes to go with Girija, the librarian’s granddaughter. In the world of Malgudi there is no dearth of hotels, clubs, studios, theatres, etc. This Eurocentric idea of nation finds full expression in R. K. Narayan’s novels.

Another interesting matter comes out after reading Narayan’s novels is that there are many instances of print-capitalism. Anderson introduces the concept of nationalism as a modular concept because of the incredible growth of communications technology which is powered by the growing reading markets created by print-capitalism. In Narayan’s Malgudi, one seems to come across many printing presses—one of them is run by Nataraja in The Man-Eater of Malgudi, while the other by Sampath in Mr. Sampath. A new press is seen in The Talkative Man, and in the same novel we find a Public Library and Reading-Room where the talkative man often meets Rann, the self-styled Futurologist. In The Vendor of Sweets we learn about Mali’s short-story manufacturing machine.

But, Indian nationalist discourse affirms that the world is where the European powers have challenged the non-European peoples and, by virtue of their superior material culture, have subjugated them. But they have failed to colonize the inner, essential identity of the East, which lay in its distinctive, and superior, spiritual culture. The home is where the East is undominated, sovereign, master of its own fate. Narayan agrees with Partha Chatterjee here and that’s why in The Vendor of Sweets, he seems to problematise the viability of a pure tradition in the culturally hybridized society in postcolonial India. The novel tries to testify to Narayan’s complex use of the text which projects to some extent, a dialectical structure of values between pre-colonial purity of tradition and the post-Independence hybridization of
culture. Narayan’s presentation of Jagan, the sweet vendor as a Gandhian, serves the purpose of positioning the character within a ready-made structure of attitude and reference to problematise culture in the context of ideological values.

After a deep scrutiny of Narayan’s novels it is found that though the novelist is a traditionalist, he is undeniably conscious of the domineering elements of Indian traditional culture, which is quite different from the conclusions of many other Indian experts who attribute all the sufferings of subalterns to colonial rule and western culture. And further from his delineation it is seen that in his understanding the modernization of India not only means the re-examination of colonial rule and its surplus but also the re-examination of own tradition which is valued by the nationalists. When the miserable conditions of subaltern groups were talked about in The Financial Expert, it is an indication that the colonial institutions are the source of sufferings of the subaltern groups. We see in the novel, British opened the bank in the small town like Malgudi which actually trapped the poor into deep debt and they cannot get out of the circle. But a close investigation of the novel reveals that it is the native financial advisors like Margayya who were misleading the poor people and brought them to misery. It is found that Narayan observes the social stratification in the modern transition of India. The elites take the share of the benefits from the institution established by the colonizer and after independence they feel comfortable with the existing hierarchical structure and unwilling to make significant change, which is the real source of sufferings of subaltern groups.

But it cannot be overlooked after reading Narayan that subaltern groups are actually the victims of the modern transition of India. His fiction, The Man-Eater of
*Malgudi*, can be interpreted as a metaphor of the miserable condition of Indian subaltern groups. The subaltern groups are obedient and suppressed by the elite groups under the disguise of so called democracy or in the name of the protection of tradition. The deeply-rooted Indian tradition, such as the attitude about widowhood, the culture of dowries, the *sati*, the caste system and so on, and the state machine established in the name of democracy are just like Vasu, powerful and irresistible, who become the man-eaters, and devour the dignity or even the lives of ordinary people.

The study also unfolds that there are two categories of women in the fictional world of R.K. Narayan. The first category which consists of Malati and Chandran’s mother (in *The Bachelor of Arts*), Savitri (in *The Dark Room*), Susila (in *The English Teacher*), Srinivas’ wife, Sampath’s wife and Ravi’s mother (in *Mr. Sampath*), Raju’s mother (in *The Guide*), Natraj’s wife (in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*), Raman’s aunt (in *The Painter of Signs*), Girija (in *Talkative Man*), Sita (in *The World of Nagaraj*), Bala and Surma (in *Grandmother’s Tale*) who subscribe to orthodoxy, who like to be incarcerated in the four walls of their house, who get pleasure in the happiness of family members, and who are ignorant of their self-identity. The other category to which Ponni and Santa Bai (in *The Dark Room*), Shanti (in *Mr. Sampath*), Bharti (in *The Waiting for the Mahatma*), Rosie (in *The Guide*), Rangi (in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*), Grace (in *The Vendor of Sweets*), Daisy (in *The Painter of Signs*) and Sarasa (in *Talkative Man*) belong, represent modern emancipated woman who leads her life on her own terms, having complete freedom, who stands shoulder to shoulder with men, leaving no stones unturned to seek economic independence.
Another matter that has emerged after study is that R. K. Narayan cannot be counted as a liberalist or a feminist and he never claims to be either, but he is really concerned about women’s issues consciously from the very beginning. In *A Dark Room*, he faithfully describes the miserable conditions and horrible oppressions imposed upon women. They are deprived of subjectivity and have no say in the family. The dark room is the only place where they can seek shelter when abused and it is also a prison for them. But from *The Guide*, women begin to be powerful and attain their subjectivity and their courage to break the existing rigid patriarchal codes of family and their religion. This home-world dichotomy and social roles of middle-class women become crucial in Indian nationalist ideology. Conversely, but in an equally regressive fashion, Bharati in *Waiting for Mahatma* is represented also as the incarnation of the modern, feminized Indian nation. Repeatedly viewed as a mother-figure, whether by Sriram or Gandhi, she enacts the gendered, circumscribed script of women within Indian nationalism that critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Partha Chatterjee, and Ketu Katrak have theorized so persuasively.

Another important feature that has come forward after investigation and which plays a pivotal role in delineation of Narayan’s idea of nation is Gandhism. The terms of literary and social discourse in pre and post-independence era in India have largely been determined by Gandhian philosophy and thought. Gandhism that forms a significant part of post-independence or post-colonial discourse not only in India but in the Third World takes an important place in Narayan’s fictional world with the novelist’s distinctly inimitable style and manner. His *Waiting for the Mahatma* is a sort of Gandhian novel that charts its protagonist’s growth from selfish privilege to
local, committed activism. In this novel Narayan’s interpretation of Gandhism are three dimensional. Firstly, it is to be said that the novel artistically exposes Gandhism by the presentation of the character Bharati and here Sriram is nothing but an imitator of the principle for the sake of establishing a permanent impression in the mind of Bharati. Secondly, the ironical implication of the theme of Gandhism and which is actually the progression of the first point of view. Thirdly, by the presentation of the revolutionary principles of Subhas Chandra Bose and Sriram’s fractional acceptance of these principles Narayan, it seems, raises the conflict between Gandhism and revolutionary theories of the activists like Subhas Bose, Balgangadhar Tilak etc which is a debatable subject till today. Though in the novel, *The Guide*, Gandhism is not presented directly but there is an implication of this idea in the text. The novel reveals the transformation of its protagonist, Raju, a Railway Guide to a Spiritual Guide and in this process Gandhism, ironically, makes an indirect appearance in the action of the novel. In the text no Gandhi occasionally figures, or motives the action of the plot from the background, but the story deals with the mimicry of a fraud who wants to parade Gandhism to hide his previous guilt as well as to create a grand image in the minds of the simple, rustic folk of Mangala, a small village. In *The Vendor of Sweets* Narayan comically reveals the influence of Gandhism on the character of the chief protagonist, Jagan who imitates Mahatma Gandhi as well as exercises Gandhian principles without knowing the real depth of this grand ‘moral and ethical principle.’ Narayan’s purpose, here, is to satirize the whim of both pre and post-independence India where the imitation of Gandhi has become a fashion. A number of Narayan’s novels that are not centralized on the Gandhian theme also adhere to the Gandhian
ideology. In *A Tiger for Malgudi* and in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, the victory of good and the annihilation of evil could be treated as a vindication of Gandhian ideology and principles.

Moreover, Narayan projects Gandhi’s anti-imperialistic stance in his critique of the Western educational system in some of his novels. From the post-colonial viewpoint, it is to be interpreted that Narayan in his autobiographical trilogy, *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*, was boldly critiquing colonial educational institutions. Like Tagore, Narayan resented anything that cramped the soul and believed in a return to an educational system based not on rote learning but on story-telling, games for the young and appreciation of Indian culture.

There are references to the Indian freedom movement and sometimes direct description of the freedom movement as revealed after investigation. There is a lively presentation of people’s tendency in his novels. The English rulers were trying all their best to remain in the country. But their incessant endeavor to bring social and cultural change in India aroused the ire of the Indian populace. People rose against them and started Civil-Disobedience Movement and ultimately Quit India Movement in 1942 to drive the British out of India. Mahatma Gandhi led the movement and men and women, like Sriram and Bharati in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, who came under his spell, joined it. Violent agitators, like Jagdish (in *Waiting for the Mahatma*) and Veeraswami (in *The Bachelor of Arts*), who believed in violence and activism, also came on scene of the national movement of independence. Very early in the novel, *Swami and Friends*, Narayan introduced the conflict between the British rulers and the ruled in colonial India. The school boys, like Swami and his friends, also joined
the movement. They walked out of their classes, broke window-panes, took out processions and raised slogans against the British Government. They participated in the Civil-Disobedience Movement of Mahatma Gandhi and burnt their clothes made up in foreign mills. In some other novels like *The Vendor of Sweets, The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, etc., we see some references of Indian freedom movement. In *Grandmother’s Tale* there is reference to the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. In his characteristic mode of comedy, he viewed this conflict in terms of cultural collision between Christianity and traditional Hinduism.

An analysis of his novels reveals that R. K. Narayan deals neither with the aristocracy at the top nor the poor. He practically, like Jane Austen, identifies himself with the middle class people and their various involvements, their clashes and adjustments that constitute the main interest of his novels. Like E.M. Forster and D.H. Lawrence, he is a critic of contemporary society who ironically criticizes the follies and foibles of modern civilization reared on the material values of life. He had a peculiar liking for religious life and hence in all his novels, we are bound to meet *Sanyasis*, temples and references from religious scriptures. Narayan reaps the religious atmosphere in his novels by naming the household God and goddess of Indian religion as *Lakshmi, Saraswati, Parbati, Radhakrishna* etc. There are some yogic names as *Rishi, Muni, Swami, Mahatma*, etc. Most of the characters in his novels are religious by nature. The religiosity in R.K. Narayan is perfectly flavoured with the fragrance of Indian culture.

Thus, Narayan’s novels can be studied as a critique of Indian nation and nationhood and its inter-related discipline of nationalistic theory. Narayan’s admission
that there is a nucleus of absolute truth in all his novels substantiates his faith in the contents of Indian traditional values. The Narayanian nationhood is cemented in the culture and philosophy of India and it is fully in conformity with the essentials of Hinduism. The tension between the one and many, a perennial theme of Hinduism operates quietly throughout Narayan's fiction, the author's optimistic view of life traces the will of God in all matters, actions and ends, is a marked feature of Hindu religion and it helps to generate Indian Nationalism. Narayan's novel, The Dark Room transcends Nationalism as it is both a national allegory in its indirect criticism of British rule and a religious ideological fiction.

Therefore, the issue of Hindu roots plays a pivotal role in R.K. Narayan's fictional world. Like many of Narayan's protagonists, Chandran comes back to his Indian roots, after attempting to find a place in the colonial society, attracted by the profitable benefits and material wealth. It is Naryan's belief that Indian culture, and most importantly Hindu culture and heritage can bring stability and harmony to an otherwise struggling society and this is his concern in the novel, The Bachelor of Arts. For Krishnan in The English Teacher, who studies in the English language, the English writers, poets and the Bible, and who makes a career out of the same education, finds that these do not bring him comfort or support or relief at his time of need. He realizes education and his choice of career have actually removed him from his roots and culture—and ultimately from reality. He realizes the futility of an education such as this that serves effectively to keep them in subjugation not only physically, but also in their approach to life and mind-set.
Another interesting facet of Narayan’s idea of nation which has come out from this study is that in his writing, a kind of problematic Indian ambiance has been reflected. Here the writer has developed certain peculiar perception of India and Indians. It is a country of snakes and elephants and Maharajas; of cunning Brahmans and cheating baniyas. It is a world of magic and philosophy where a tiger can attain philosophical teaching. In this magic world a living person can easily speak to the dead one. It is the world where the horoscope-matching of both would be husband and wife is the prerequisite condition of marriage. This world is also passing through the religious and the social evils like superstition, gender difference, caste system, child marriage and dowry system. This magic world full of traditional and supernatural values has been the deep-rooted source of Narayan’s idea of nation and that is the ambiance of India as Narayan has seen.

R.K. Narayan (1906-2001) was born and brought up in a period when cultural hybridization was already institutionalized in the Indian sub-continent. Like other Indian writers in English, such as Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan is seen to scrutinize the Indian society continually under change due to the colonial rule and its casual consequence—the conflict between east and west that has been mentioned by Partha Chatterjee while discussing his idea of nation. Narayan’s position in this regard is deemed quite unique—he is aware that westernization is the ultimate reality of the post-colonial scenario, yet he is found to have accepted the traditional Indian culture as the real asset for the people living in India. That is, his attitude towards nation appears to have resulted from and shaped by the reality prevailing in the post-colonial setting. In Narayan’s Malgudi the two worlds are
shown as inextricably interconnected—even though no more than three actual European characters appear in minor roles during the whole cycle—and linked forever, since on the public level India has become as inexorably dominated by 20th century progress as on the private level it has remained loyal to the Indian past, to the traditions that express the essential genius of India and to which its people return when the world’s attractions grow dim. Narayan’s loyalty to a single imaginary town, Malgudi—‘the microcosm of India’—which changes and yet remains essentially the same, is in keeping with the consciousness of the essential continuity of the culture to which his work belongs naturally and spontaneously to rediscover a nation in all its fact and fiction, tradition and modernity, past and present—which is the prime concern of the creator of Malgudi. The point to be noted is—Narayan’s fictional world depicts a nation in process. A change is coming like Yeats’ *Easter 1916*. The beauty to be born would be fractured and ambivalent. It would be hybrid in essence. And Narayan posits his protagonists in the liminal zone of transition.

Narayan is, thus, deeply entrenched in the nation and nationhood which is rendered clearer once one witnesses the originality of the texts, the attitude of characters, the ideals of the protagonists or the reactions of the Malgudians in a particular situation or a context. A reading of his novels unleashes the spontaneous flow of nationalistic views of the writer. His novels offer us an insight into the great theoretical doctrine of nation and nationalism.
Works Cited
