CHAPTER - V
CONCLUSION

The human beings have been migrating, since their origin, from their own homeland to other geographical and cultural locations. In the contemporary era of globalization rate of migration is increasing day by day due to many reasons like advancement in the information technology. The migrants carry their deeply rooted cultural values, beliefs and habits with them to the host country. The cultural conflict begins when the different cultural values, beliefs and habits clash against each other. Most of the immigrants find it difficult to adjust with the new environment. Clash of cultures causes the crisis of their identity. The certain experiences in the adopted land lead them under a flux of two opposing cultures and two contrasting worlds.

The Diasporic Literature is a best way to represent and discuss the problems witnessed by the immigrants in exile and even at homeland. Theirs is an attempt to negotiate between two different polarities. The Diasporic literature is an authentic tool to express and discuss the problems experienced by the immigrants in the cross-cultural encounters in migration. This is an attempt to negotiate, while adapting, between roots and adopted culture, between feelings of outsider and belonging. The perennial immigrants who live with double perspectives face the problems like cultural conflict and crisis for identity and help us to understand the intensity as well as to bring accuracy in understanding of these problems. It also assists to put forth some authentic and reliable suggestions related to the cultural clash and identity crisis.

Different Sri Lankan authors have attempted to write on the issues related to the cultural conflict and identity crisis in their literature. Their novels, specifically, attempt in one way or other to celebrate the culture of host country while retaining their own past. Michael Ondaatje deals with the problems of immigrants in the cross-cultural encounters in their migration. The issues related to the migrants may be best explored with the help of their cross-cultural encounters.

Michael Ondaatje is one of the authors whose vision is psychologically storming to the readers. Ondaatje creates characters which represent painful and intense emotions in their personal as well as the adopted socio-cultural context. They are torn between the culture of the country of the origin and that of the adopted
country. Ondaatje’s identity is shaped in three different countries—Sri Lanka, England and Canada—which enables him to create such desperate characters and to provoke the landscapes and themes other than the Canada and Sri Lanka.

Ondaatje’s view about the ethnicity is very interesting. He wishes to become a free, creative and imaginative writer who goes beyond his ethnic identity. Ondaatje’s writings represent in many ways the best of contemporary Asian Canadian literature in English written in the Canadian as well as at international scenario. Ondaatje is an expatriate writer and the displacement and migration have gifted him with the migrant’s double perspective. Ondaatje is criticized for concentrating on aesthetic issues rather than ethnic conditions. As Ondaatje has rejected to be considered him as an ethnic writer, he wants to be simply a writer:

As a writer I don’t think I’m concerned with art and aesthetic issues, any more than I would want to be just concerned with making the subject of being a Sri Lankan in Canada my one and only subject. I go to writing to discover as many aspects of myself and the world around me as I can. I go to discover, to explore, not to state the case I already know.

(Ondaatje with Hutcheon and Richmond, 198)

The notion of the ‘other’ is central to Ondaatje’s writing. His creation of marginal characters like Buddy Bolden deals with the themes of outsider and the ‘other’ and the issue of the identity, through the perspective of the ‘other.’ Ondaatje’s novel *Coming through Slaughter* presents Buddy Bolden as a black Afro-American cornet player, a legendary figure in the jazz music style. Bolden’s journey from reputation to namelessness, his self exile and his insanity keep him away from the twentieth century game of fame. Buddy Bolden a cornetist at the height of his musical career and suddenly becomes insane. Through the character of Buddy Bolden Ondaatje reflects himself. Ondaatje has created Bolden’s character as a tragic artist who is torn between the conflict between creative and destructive energy which crush his own identity. Here, in this novel, Ondaatje has not focused on the issue of race and has failed to foreground Bolden’s blackness or any cultural issue.

Ondaatje has realistically presented Canada—his adopted home in *In the Skin of a Lion*. In the multicultural and racist Canadian society the immigrants who come to Canada know more about the Canada than the insiders, but always reminded of their being outsiders. Such immigrants are more insiders like Patrick Lewis born in
Ontario. The protagonist Patrick while exploring about his own culture perceives himself as an immigrant and alienated in the country of his birth. Ondaatje presents the trauma of immigration through this novel. The immigrants cross boundaries across the geographical divides with full of dreams but face a number of problems in cross-cultural encounters at the alien countries. The characters like a Macedonian immigrant Daniel Stoyanoff tempt their countrymen by telling stories about the host land and how they have become wealthy after migration but deliberately avoid telling about the plights during the cross-cultural interactions.

Ondaatje presents the problems faced by the immigrants while learning the new language in the host country. One of his characters named Nicholas Temelcoff considers the language as much more difficult than to work in space. In this age he joins the school and learns English obsessively and even in dreams he sees tree changing their names, looks and characters. He knows, to learn the language of host culture is the way to survive in it. Immigrants learn the host language by mimicking the various actors. To overcome the language barrier in alien land proves to be a very difficult task. A number of challenges and struggles are faced by the immigrant communities to find the footing in the adopted home. Immigrants are torn during the process of assimilation and face identity crisis.

Ondaatje’s cross-cultural inheritance, his migrant status and complexities of identities are frequently reflected in his novels. He portrays displaced and marginalized figures with different and fractured cultural identities. His some characters face difficulties while coping with the new culture and new language or his characters wish to erase their own identities like the English patient. His characters make them invisible to the outside world; sometimes they keep themselves away from the publicity and the game of fame or change their names to remain nameless. Theme of disappearance is reflected through most of his characters. Some of his characters wish to erase the boundaries of the nation and prefer to remain nation-less, or without boundary which reflects Ondaatje’s view of deterritorialization and global culture. His characters think beyond the nationality, cultural identity and ethnicity. They present the globalized and deterritorialized culture. The sense of cosmopolitan is reflected through some of his characters. The stories or problems experienced by his characters in immigration are not concerns to his characters only but are applicable to all immigrants in the globe.
Most of the protagonists of Ondaatje are marginal figures who work in slaughter house, tanneries or they do some filthy jobs. Ondaatje deals with the themes like identity, insider outsider, native and alien, absence and presence in his works. Ondaatje’s complex cultural background stimulates him to write about displacement and dislocation. In the novel *The English Patient* Ondaatje explores the problem of identity and displacement experienced both by the colonizer and the colonized during the World War II. The issues of nationality and nationalism and the concept of homogenous cultural identity are also explored. His displaced characters are like the protagonist English patient who is actually an English accented Hungarian by birth and Kirpal Singh an Indian nicknamed as Kip who is a hybridized character. Hana is a Canadian nurse psychologically disturbed due to the number of deaths around her and Caravaggio who is wounded physically due to the war. All these characters represent fractured and fragmented identities.

Ondaatje’s characters reflect isolation, rootlessness, nostalgia and alienation. Ondaatje’s novel *Anil’s Ghost* describes his inherited home and paints picture of everyday life during the Civil War or ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka. His protagonist Anil Tissera is torn between nostalgia for her Sri Lankan childhood and desire for the freedom in the exile. Anil Tissera is a forensic anthropologist in an alien land. Due to experiences of isolation and alienation in host culture, she has married with one of the fellow Sri Lankan medical students. She feels nostalgic for the Sri Lankan culture. They speak about Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan things only which makes her happy. She whispers her desire for jiggery and jackfruit while referring to a specific barber in Bampalapitiya. Her longing for Sri Lanka reflects more when Anil saves enough money to place a call to Colombo. Like Ondaatje himself, Anil’s character traces the influence of three different countries- Sri Lanka, England and America. Her identity is shaped in three countries. After her assimilation in these cultures, she is no longer able to speak Sinhalese or Tamils; even her brain holds only the codes of Denver and Portland. Her character explores disconnected feelings associated to the cross-cultural differences and the people who feel like foreigners at home or abroad. She faces the cultural clash both at homeland and at host land.

Most of Ondaatje’s characters show hybridity or in-between identity. His characters migrate from their root and try to cope with the foreign culture by changing names or hiding their true identity. Ondaatje’s novel *Divisadero* explores the theme of identity. The protagonists Anna and Segura hide their original identities.
Anna travels far away from her American roots to rural France. Again, this novel also concerns with the theme of isolation and alienation. Ondaatje articulates his concern to the issue of cultural clashes in his autobiographical novel *The Cat’s Table*. The characters from this novel don’t want to detach from their own past and culture completely and present in-betweenness. Ondaatje’s characters are caught between two cultures of two worlds doomed to the agonizing “neither-nor” condition.

Ondaatje celebrates the cultural hybridity through fragmented memories and images and also the repressed voices and forms of thought. His novels bear a testimony of the cultural hybridity. After studying the issues related to the cultural clash and identity crisis in Ondaatje’s selected texts, one can claim that the problems in immigration due to the cross-cultural encounters are increasing day by day all over the world as the major problems. The selected novels picture acutely the problem emerging due to cultural encounters.

The present research puts forward the following significant points. The findings of the study are significant for the cultural studies and issue related to identity politics. The following findings may help as the guideline or suggestion to the Asian migrants migrating outside their homelands to the other countries.

1) Immigrants face the problems due to clash of cultures. Everyone is born and brought up in a certain culture having particular set of beliefs and values. Each individual, either immigrant or native, inherits a particular culture. Normally people behave according to their own cultural background, and while they cross the boundaries of their motherland, they carry with them their deeply rooted cultural beliefs, customs and cultural habits to the adopted country. These cultural practices may not coincide with the host culture because both of them carry their particular cultural background with them. Immigrants seem unable to adjust in new environment. The difference in cultural background cannot fulfill their expectation which leads to cultural conflicts.

2) In the multicultural background most of Ondaatje’s characters face the problem of cultural diversity. Migration gives rise to a series of important questions like minority-majority, clashes over the issues such as language, regional autonomy, racial discrimination and colour of skin different cultural and social values, beliefs or the problem of maintaining cultural identity in the host land.

3) Culture is considered as one of the most determining factors in an individual’s identity. Intermingling of cultures causes identity crisis. Identity is a concept of
self-perception through the others’ receptions and comments. Immigrant loses his original cultural/ethnic identity in the host land. His identity becomes hybrid or in-between. Hybridity causes multiple identities.

4) Ondaatje’s most of the characters tolerate a testimony of cultural hybridity and are caught between two cultures of two worlds doomed to agonizing ‘neither-nor’ condition of existence.

5) In the host land immigrants face a number of challenges and struggle to find the footing in adopted land. Immigrants are torn during the process of assimilation and face identity crisis and the disconnected feelings associated to the cross-cultural differences.

6) Immigrants are disillusioned when their dreams do not come true. Immigrants cross boundaries across the geographical divides with full of dreams but cross-cultural encounters in an alien culture put them in a number of problems while fulfilling their dreams. In the host land they find nothing more than the frustration.

7) The theme of the ‘other’ is reflected in immigration. The sense of alienation, outsiderness and ‘othernesses’ are found in the writings of immigrants. Immigrant writer reflect their ‘self’ through their characters.

8) The theme of erasure of identity is reflected in the immigrants’ writings. Characters make them invisible to the outside world or sometimes they keep themselves away from the publicity and the game of fame. Some characters reject the borders of the nation and wish to be global or cosmic. The theme of deterritorialization or border-less culture is reflected in their works. Their characters think beyond the nationality, cultural identity and ethnicity. They present the globalized and deterritorialized cultures.

9) Most of Ondaatje’s characters suffer from the nostalgia for homeland and at the same time they show intense desire for the freedom in the exile. Dislocated immigrants evoke memories of homeland or past to which they do not now belong.

10) Immigrants suffer from the problem of double perspectives intensified by the opposite notions of native and foreigner, self and other and so on.

11) The themes of isolation, rootlessness and alienation are reflected in the immigrants’ writing.
12) Though, every one attempts to preserve his/her culture, Michael Ondaatje promotes transnational culture and wishes to create brotherhood in the world. He provokes the landscapes and themes other than his homeland and host land.

13) Immigrants create third-world and move away from both homeland and host land. They attempt to escape from the conflicting situations and forget their own culture and past and give voice to the displaced, marginalized and alienated ones. It is merely a celebration of the marginalization.

14) A sense of cosmopolitanism is represented through a number of characters which makes the writer a cosmopolitan voice. People are no longer tied to biological and geographical constraints and this view leads one to be a global writer.

15) Instead of worshiping and embracing to a particular culture, Michael Ondaatje enhances more value to humanity.

The Scope for the Further Research:
- The present research provides the scope for the further research in related or similar areas. It can prove to be significant and helpful to the research community to understand the aspects of migration.
- The study proves significant in understanding international migration policies. Interdisciplinary research work can be done especially on the historical study of migration, international politics regarding migration studies.
- The study will be helpful to understand international, transnational and cultural politics.
- Selected text may be studied from political, geographical, sociological, philosophical, economical and feministic point of view. There are number of Diasporas like the Japanese, Chinese, Indian, African, Caribbean and European comparative study will be worth research if a researcher takes in between any two Diasporas.
- The texts by Michael Ondaatje offers more scope for further studies related to language, myth and narrative technique.
- There is a scope for feministic studies through Michael Ondaatje’s texts.
- The study will be helpful to enhance more value to humanity instead of embracing particular culture.