CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Mordecai Richler's sympathies lie with minorities and many of his novels embrace themes of persecution and escape from the ghetto. An attempt has been made in this thesis to discuss the problems and prospects of the Jewish immigrants in the changing Canadian society with reference to immigrant writing in the Canadian context focusing on the theme of the archetypal search for identity. And also the clash between the old and new is an inevitable process in the changing scenario of any country and this is echoed clearly in the novels of Mordecai Richler. A careful study of Richler's novels reveals that his protagonists have personal ambitions, values and dreams though they have a sense of insecurity. They try to break the Jewish ghetto on the one hand and try to establish their identity on the other in their own ways.

The researcher has taken up six novels of Mordecai Richler for scrutiny - *St. Urbain's Horseman*, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, *A Choice of Enemies*, *Joshua Then and Now*, *Son of a Smaller Hero* and *Solomon Gursky was Here*. To make it more precise, the novels are
divided into two groups and the theme imbibed in them is analysed. Except in *A Choice of Enemies*, the other novels have Jews as their protagonists.

The imbedded theme of search for identity is brought to the fore by applying the methodology—Formal, sociological and psychological.

In the Introductory chapter, the sense of homelessness of the immigrant communities in general and the Jewish community in particular is brought to the limelight. The geophysical conditions of Canada enhance the isolated and lonely feelings of the immigrants struggling in a land, totally new to them. They have the very fear of survival. The immigrant writers like Klein, Irving Layton and Mordecai Richler have brought out the immigrant consciousness through the protagonists of their novels. Like the immigrant Jews, the characters of these novels try to establish their identity in the Canadian society. ‘Search for identity’ is the recurrent theme in many a novels written by the Jewish Canadian writers. The sufferings of the Jews during the World War II, a briefing up of Holocaust, the spine chilling historical incident, the atrocity of Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazism and the butchering of the Jews are discussed in Chapter I.

In chapter II and III, a thematic study of the novels taken for scrutiny is analysed. Mordecai Richler is very much concerned about the Jewish youth
in Canada who struggle to escape the limitations of the Jewish ghetto by breaking the family ties. The tension between the assertion of the Jewish heritage and the rejection of the Jewish roots constitutes the spectrum of Richler's exploration of Jewish survival in the post War Canada. The nature of the experience undergone by the Jewish immigrant communities is classified under the following heads.

1. Experience at the geophysical level in coming to the terms with totally a new land, the climate and the natural forces.

2. Experience at the Economic and social levels.

3. Experiences generated by differences in race, religion and culture.

4. Problems of adjustment and assimilation with the existing society or communities.

5. Reconciliation of their present life with the lingering memories of their socio-cultural past.

If colonial experience of a particular kind has been a chief source of creative inspiration for the writer in Canada, immigrant experience is equally a major source of creativity for a number of Canadian writers.
One such writer is Mordecai Richler who was born in Canada, a land of immigrants. As he was born during the ‘Depression’ and brought up in the Montreal ghetto, Richler knows in and out of the suffering of the people of his very own community.

In the second chapter, the thematic structure of the first group of novels is discussed. St. Urbain’s Horseman, analyses the mental trauma of Jake – Hersh, the protagonist of the novel. Jake’s head long search for his cousin Jeoy, the Horseman, his trying to establish himself as a number one Director, his haunting fear of the Holocaust, his obsession with the Spanish war and its heroes and his search for identity form the theme of this novel. Jake Hersh’s search for dual identity, a common feature of all Richlerian Protagonists makes him run from pillar to post to achieve his goal. Richler deals with the erosion of humanistic values and also has taken up Canadian anti-Semitism in St. Urbain’s Horseman. The novel represents the thematic reconciliation of exile and ghetto.

In The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, the main character Duddy Kravitz is a Jewish youth who wants to establish himself in the Canadian society as a wealthy person. His grand father’s dictum
'A man without land is nobody' tossles him and lands him into trouble. It creates a lust for money in him. How he achieves the goal is the theme of this novel. In this process, he performs the most sickening and contemptive act of forging his friend Virgil's signature to pay the balance amount for the land he is a dreaming of. He pays a heavy prize for the land — he loses the genuine friendship of Yvette, his Canadian girl friend and Virgil, the handicapped person. Virgil is physically handicapped but Duddy the 'scheming little bastard' has minced the sentiment of his near and dear to manipulate funds for the land. Had he been brought up by his mother, Duddy would have blossomed into a forthright person. Max did not inject any religious or moral aspects into Duddy when he was young. Hence this wreck. Mr. Victor J. Ramraj opines that..

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz

transcend time, place and race

and became a novel that is At once Jewish,

Canadian and Universal (Ramraj,17).

A Choice of Enemies scrutinizes the experiences of political emigres in post war Europe. Norman Price, the protagonist of the
novel is a former Canadian Professor and a pilot who has come to London to establish his identity as a writer of thrillers. He is humane. His friendship with Ernest Haupt, the German, his love for Sally, his mental agony over the death of his brother Nicky, his amnesia which makes him land into trouble and his love–hate friendship with Karp, the selfish Jew who wants to cast off his Jewish identity form the story of this novel. Ernest who is teased by the Jewish friends of Norman acquires a status and recognition in Montreal when he saves a Jewish Shop-keeper from under the crumblings of a wall. The theme of the novel is governed by the motif of social isolation and search for identity on the part of the different types of characters in their own ways. In the third chapter, the theme imbibed in the second group of novels - Joshua Then and Now, Son of Smaller Hero and Soloman Gursky was Here is surveyed.

Joshua Then and Now looks like a thriller but humour runs through the spine of the novel. In this novel, Richler makes an attempt to confront the moral issues produced by the Holocaust in Jews who did not experience the dreadful incident directly. The Jewish protagonist Joshua Shapiro has achieved professional and
social status in the gentile world. Joshua’s establishing himself as a great television personality, the happenings in his past and present life, his mental trauma when he was accused of homo sexuality, the disturbance in the harmony of his family life _ form the main thread of this novel. Joshua’s life seems to be mysterious but the mystery surrounding his life is unraveled in the end. The protagonist Joshua who has married a gentile yearns for a dual identity.

In *The Son of a Smaller Hero*, Richler mounts a nihilistic attack on current moralities by creating an interesting character, Noah Adler, an idealistic youth from the Jewish ghetto. The author describes the Jewish ghetto of Montreal in an interesting way.

The ghetto of Montreal has no walls and no true dimensions (*Son of a Smaller Hero,10*).

In this novel Richler has dealt with the problems of the Jewish youth who wants to escape from the ghetto to lead an oxygenated life in the midst of the gentiles. Noah comes out of his house and lives an independent life. But he commits adultery by which he loses the sympathy of the readers. The orthodox Jews look at him with askance for going astray from the right path.
In Solomon Gursky was Here Richler goes deep into the Jewish community’s search for origins. The author tries to fuse Jewish and Canadian Historical experience in this novel. The characters are mostly Jewish Canadians who are in their modern Diaspora exile. This spirit lingers with an irate liberty and freedom but their hearts crave for recognition. The Protagonist’s feelings are poured out when he says that he has no tap root at all. His craving for his origin and the past echo the yearning of the immigrants in general and Solomon Gursky’s ambitious nature in particular.

In any fictional writing the themes and motifs are concretized only through characters. Characters are fictional creations and novelists create them to humanize their themes. The fourth chapter deals with Richler’s characterization. Richler effectively portrays the Jewish characters from his Montreal society in his novels. As the novelist himself belonged to that society he could easily bring out the mental agony of the Jews in totally a new country. Richler shows a great concern for the problems of the Jewish immigrant youth, who face psychic tension and rootlessness in an align land. These feelings are reflected in Richler’s characters. They want to establish themselves in the Canadian Society and hence
the constant search for identity on the part of the protagonist to come up in life.

In St. Urbain's Horseman, the protagonist Jake Hersh is picturised by Richler as a family man who loves his wife and children to the very core. His head-on search for his cousin Joey, the Horseman and the alleged charge of rape against him make him feel restless. Jake's inferiority complex that he is a Jew torments him. His mediocrity in his profession stings his heart. He underestimates his compatibility to Pauline in the realm of marriage.

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, portrays Duddy Kravitz's lust for money and his readiness to stoop to any level to achieve his goal. He is a dreamer who wants to acquire wealth resorting to fraudulent ways and not by forthright means. In order to fulfil his grandfather's words that 'A man without land is nobody', he tries to mobilize funds from all sources. But to make the final part of the payment, he commits forgery which mars the character of Duddy. But he is attached to his family members which is an inborn trait of a true Jew.
In *A choice of Enemies*, the characterization of the protagonist Norman Price is fantastically done by the author. His readiness to merge with the Jews, his humanitarian nature, his love for his brother Nicky, and his friendship towards The American Exiles reveal the greatness of his character. Karp, who wants to shed his Jewish identity and yearn for assimilation resort to wicked methods to survive in the world. Ernest Haupt, the German who is eschewed by the Jewish Community gets recognition for saving a Jew from the debris during an accident. The alienated character undergoes ironic reintegration.

Richler in his novel, *The Son of a Smaller Hero* creates an interesting character Noah Adler. He is a Jewish idealistic youth who frees himself from the ghetto to lead an independent life. His refusal to participate in the ritual, ‘Shiva’ during his father’s death reveals the fact that he wants to cast off his Jewish identity. But he is supportive to his mother when circumstance demands. That shows his Jewish character. His mind wavers between Noah, the Jew and Noah, the Canadian. He sets off to Europe in the end of the novel in search of ‘a footing’ in this world to survive.
In the novels of Mordecai Richler, there is an obsession with achieving success and at the same time a continuous restlessness. A deep study of his novels reveals that he is a writer who is preoccupied with the problems of the Jewish youth in Canada. The chief problem of the protagonist in his novels seems to get due recognition or identity for themselves in the Canadian society. They clash with the gentiles. At the same time they are friendly with them. They are ready to break the Jewish ghetto or severe their relation with their families. Some of the protagonist have got married to gentiles which is totally against Judaism. There is always a mistrust and misunderstanding between the Jews and the non-Jews. They are upset by the Holocaust and they fear for their lives. They try to establish their identity either by becoming popular and rich or in some other way. They are ready to leave Canada and venture to places like New York and Europe to prove themselves. They struggle to climb up the social ladder and all that they expect is to acquire respect and status. This intelligent, business-minded, hard-working folk achieve their goal in the end. But the feeling of alienation is still there in their blood even after having got a separate country (Israel) for their home.
There are two kinds of Jews in the Western world. The Jews who forget their history or the past are called assimilationists. They want to rid themselves of their Jewish identity. Karp of *A Choice of Enemies* belongs to this category because he believes that assimilation with Norman alone will make him survive in the Canadian society. The other kind of Jew is one who yearns for dual identity. These people necessarily and inevitably suffer from an *identity crisis*, which is a serious psychological problem. Richler's protagonists Jake Hersh, Joshua Shapiro and Noah Adler crave for dual identity and hence they face identity crisis. Jake and Joshua are married to gentile women whereas Noah has a clandestine affair with a gentile lady. So they have to satisfy their partners by their spirit of assimilation into the Canadian society. Moreover, the very thought that they are both Jews and Canadians give them a sense of satisfaction. They want to escape from the Jewish ghetto; at the same time want to adhere to the Jewish rites and rituals; they are under the grip of this ambiguous feeling. They have faith in the joint family system with their grandfathers as the head; but have strained – relationship with their uncles. While Noah refuses to sit for his father's 'Shiva', Jake Hersh sits for his father's Shiva out of compulsion. Duddy Kravitz who loves his grand – father more than anybody else in this world
develops a lust for money and doesn't care for Jewish or Canadian identity. But Richler's novels are mostly based on the search for the dual identity.

It is reliably learnt from the recent statistics that there are approximately 14 million of Jews living all over the world. More than 5 million live in the U.S.A and less than 5 million live in Israel, the Promised Land. There are less than 2 million Jews in Europe, 4,00,000 in Latin America, and 3,50,000 Jews in Canada. Further they are living in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Very few live in Salvador, Iraq and Tahiti (120 each). There is growing concern about the declining demographic trends among the Jews; world Jewry is losing annually an average of 50,000 or 150 every day. In India presently, the Jewish population is estimated at 6000. Jews are the only people in the world who have been confronted with hostility in every country they have settled. Opposition to the Jews did not begin in Germany but dates back to 2,000 years before Christian era. It could proudly he said that...

the only country where the Jews could live without fear of persecution is India, because of the Indian tradition of Catholicism and assimilation.

(Khuni Krishnan, 6).
It is just a contrast to the Jews who feared of persecution in Canada. Richler who passed away in 2001 at the age of seventy would have been aware of his community enjoying a good status in India. There are synagogues in India for them to worship. Khuni Krishnan who reviewed the book *India's Jewish Heritage: Ritual, Art and life cycle*, says that the Jews are allowed to prosper in India. Further he says...

They took up English education and there were a large number of eminent Canadian Jews, including lawyers, doctors, teachers, artists and writers. It is estimated that there are 60,000 Indian Jews in Israel who maintain their own identity (Khuni Krishnan, 6).

Jews have their home at 'Israel' and they no more suffer from 'homelessness' discussed in the first chapter. But there is a strong feeling that still the Jews, who can survive where ever they go, are under the grip of alienation in Israel due to political turmoil.
Already attempts have been made to study Mordecai Richler, focusing on theme, ambivalence and narrative technique. This great writer is compared with Indian writers as well. Dr. Ramamurthy’s *Malgudi to Montreal: An Assessment of the novels of R.K. Narayan and Mordecai Richler* reveals the common features of the two authors as novelists and human beings. Both Narayan and Richler care for values. The technique of narration of both the writers has semblance. Another important writer who has worked on Mordecai Richler is Mr. J. Victor Ramraj. His book ‘Mordecai Richler’ is packed with information about Richler’s concern for the Jewish Community, his greatness as a story-teller, his ambiguity, symbolism, humour and Irony. David Meyers, Kerry Mc Sweeney and Mark Levin are writers worth a mention here. Kerry Mc Sweeney’s ‘Richler’s Fire works’ brings to light the plus and minus points of Richler, as a novelist. David Meyers gives a fine picture of Richler as a satirist. His vulgar writing is deplored by many writers. Though attempts were made to study the novels of Mordecai Richler in these lines, no serious attempts have been made to focus on the theme of search for identity. An attempt has been made in this dissertation to study this aspect by choosing six novels of this author. Richler tries to present his protagonists who want to break the Jewish ghetto in search of establishing their identity in these novels. They achieve their goal with great difficulty.
The study attempted at, in this thesis, is to trace out the theme of 'Search for Identity' in Mordecai Richler's novels. The researcher has identified the common thematic centrality in Richler's novels specially taken for study. The thematic study of his novels brings to light the author's concern for the mankind in general and of his own community in particular. The study attempted might give fresh insights into the literary works of Mordecai Richler and place him in a new perspective.