CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters, an attempt was made to critically examine the selected travel writings on India by William Dalrymple and Mark Tully and cohesively assimilate the socio-cultural, historical and political images as represented in their works. The focus has been on (1) travel writing as a genre and its historical overview; (2) situating William Dalrymple and Mark Tully as travel writers within the Indian context in the light of their spatio-cultural identity; (3) the engagement of these two travel writers with Indian history, religion, politics and significant socio-cultural issues; (4) critical evaluation of the strategies adopted by Dalrymple and Tully in their narratives to represent various aspects India. Travel has been a sustained motif in human life since time immemorial and accordingly, accounts of travel have existed in oral or written form. Recounting of the travel undertaken has been an endeavour to share experiences, to educate and also to disseminate information through language by reliving the journey based on memory.

Travel writing as a genre defies any specific definition as it is inherently pluralistic and multidisciplinary in nature. As discussed in the ‘Introduction’, it is an amalgamation of adventure, history, anthropology, spiritual quest, political commentary, philosophical treatise and much more depending on the inclination of the writer. It goes without saying that the travel writer is propelled towards travel by the inherent desire to explore, expand the horizons of knowledge and to learn the unknown and the ‘other’. But the writer is equally driven by the desire to share his experiences with the others. Thus, it can be said that travel writings, under the ‘loose generic label’ are non-fictional, experiential accounts in first-person that map the spirit of the travelled locale and the culture based on the writer’s perception.

In the medieval period, journeys were undertaken as pilgrimages and chivalric quests or for spiritual enlightenment and were fraught with difficulties, uncertainties and adversities. Records of such travels provided significant pointers
to the subsequent travellers. With the passage of time, new discoveries and inventions brought about a shift towards empirical enquiry. With the invention of printing press, travel documents began to be produced as ‘voyages and travel’. As pointed out by Carl Thompson, exploration and tourism gave impetus to travel and travel writing. As brought forth in the Introduction, Thomas Cook’s concept of package holiday and the European imperialistic designs contributed significantly to exploration narratives. But in the twentieth century, the ‘narratorial self’ emerged largely and paved the way for the evolution from ‘voyages and travels’ to ‘travel writings’. In the contemporary scenario, with the increased accessibility of travel, travel writing has been radically democratized in the form of blogs, travel reviews, television shows etc.

However, recognition of travel writing as a literary genre has been very recent probably because travel writings now are not mere detailed, realistic accounts of travel. Rather they have become narratives in which the interest is focussed both on travel as well as the traveller’s responses. Moreover, the protean and the multidisciplinary nature of the genre makes it more challenging and has intrigued critics. A number of ‘academic readers’ or critics like Pratt, Campbell, Paul Fussell, Debbie Lisle, Sachidanandan Mohanty etc. have contributed substantially by looking into the fundamental aspects of travel writings, its growth from the historical perspective, situating the contemporary travel writings in the theoretical frameworks of postcolonialism, multiculturalism etc. Travel writing has been critiqued differently. While some critics consider it to be retrogressive, deceptive, biased and illusionary as mentioned in the Introduction, others view it positively as a cosmopolitan venture that bridges the gap and moves towards a global community.

India has always fascinated people from within and abroad with its intriguing plurality, cultural embeddedness, glorious past and enigmatic political and religious contemporary scenario. The present study was delimited to the contemporary travel writings of William Dalrymple and Mark Tully in a comparative mode as these two writers have been closely associated with India and their travel writings produce images of contemporary India cutting across
history, society, culture and religion within the spatio-temporal framework. It becomes evident from the overview in the chapter “Indian Scenario of Travel Writing” that India has been ventured and imaged by many foreign travellers like Megasthanese, Fa-hian, Xuanzang, Al-beruni, Marco Polo etc. Within India as well, the notion of travel has deep roots and travel accounts have been chronicled in epics like *Ramayana, Mahabharata* and in ancient folk narratives. As brought out earlier, contemporary travel writers in India and on India like Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh etc. have made their mark globally.

William Dalrymple and Mark Tully as travel writers on India are interesting because of their plural identity and dual locales. They stand apart because they are British and have been living in India with a deep fascination and interest in India. They have imbibed Indian ways yet have maintained a distanced critical stance. Besides an outsider’s awe, their travel writings are marked with an insider’s insight, involvement and concern. It becomes evident from a close textual reading of their travel writings namely, *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi, The Age of Kali, Nine Lives: In the Search of the Sacred in the Modern India, No Full Stops in India, India in Slow Motion* and *India’s Unending Journey* that besides history, both Dalrymple and Tully deftly map the dynamism in Indian culture and critique significant social and political issues that have impacted India in some way or the other.

It can be said that the increasing literary credibility of travel writing as a genre is the result of its inclusive and protean nature that is marked with intersections with other literary genres such as history, ethnography and even anthropology. Travel writing and history might seem discrete but many travel writings feature extensive use of history. Keeping this in view, in the third chapter entitled “Intersections Between Travel Writing and History” an attempt was made to examine the engagement with history in Dalrymple’s *City of Djinns, Nine Lives* and Tully’s *No Full Stops in India* and *India in Slow Motion*. On the basis of the certain common tenets that have emerged between history as a genre and the selected travel writings, it can be said that travel writings supplement history by producing social history. Aspects like ‘from the below’ perspective, verity with an
element of subjectivity in travel writings enhance the understanding of history. Both Dalrymple and Tully uncover the stories and events of past to represent the diverse socio-cultural aspects of India. They incorporate the representation of past both as a quest for the historical development as well as for a comprehensive understanding of contemporary India. In Dalrymple’s travel writings, the readers experience the past through a series of stories about various characters encountered by Dalrymple, who are in turn linked to historical figures and events.

A close perusal of the texts reveals that Dalrymple has carefully developed his persona in the narrative and is at the centre of his narrative. Dalrymple’s travel writings are appropriate examples of the style where investigation and research feature more prominently within the text and are subsequently more concerned with verity while still containing personal and subjective interpretations. At times, like in *City of Djinns*, the temporal dimension becomes prominent instead of the spatial. But Tully’s travel writings exhibit a balanced temporal and spatial dimension and his focus is more on the current politics and topical issues.

Instead of the normative journey/travel motif, the writings of Dalrymple and Tully can be said to be ‘travels in dwellings’ as they have been in India for a long time and have developed an experiential understanding of India. Their writings exhibit an inclusive writing process which includes anecdotes, interviews, explanations as well as well-researched background within a narrative. Dalrymple and Tully’s long stay in India as well as their interactions with individuals through interviews, establish verity in their travel writings. Both the writers problematize the historical event within the social matrix and foreground the perspective ‘from the below’ through direct interaction with the common people who have not only experienced the event but continue to live it through memory. Thus it can be said that travel writing as a genre makes a strong case for its inclusion in the discipline of history as a valuable contributor to it.

In the chapter entitled “Socio-Cultural Representation of Contemporary India” an attempt was made to map the images of India as Dalrymple and Tully represent in their texts. A close analysis of the texts shows that Dalrymple and Tully articulate their concerns regarding critical issues afflicting India and engage
themselves with the matters close to the common masses through an insider’s perspective. They very lucidly capture the issues of caste, unemployment, gender, politics, child marriage, widowhood, sati, the plight of farmers etc. There are insightful references to the underlying communal and caste tensions prevailing in India. Both the writers take up sensitive gender issues that have been a persistent presence in the Indian socio-cultural matrix. But it needs to be pointed out that both the writers have glossed over the realistic contemporary situation of the empowered and agential women as well as the endeavours being made to provide greater opportunities, education and quality of life to women in India. Therefore, it can be said that the images of women produced in their travel writings are not inclusive and comprehensive.

Within the backdrop of modernization, Dalrymple and Tully juxtapose the binary images of the urban and rural India, the developed metropolitan cities with the still traditional villages of India, the transformed and the transforming India and foreground the changes that Indian culture has undergone. They bring forth intriguing aspects of India’s past and present but are critical of the excessive western impact on the Indian culture. They establish that India’s pluralist traditions, heterodox philosophical thought and religions still form the core of the socio-cultural fabric despite dynamism in Indian society. Tully specifically disapproves of the Indians’ drift away from religion. He is critical of both the colonizers and the Indians who have not been able to decolonize their minds.

In the chapter entitled “Narratology” their texts have been analyzed in the discursive framework of polyphonic-ethnographic writing, dialogism and intertexuality. The polyphonic expression in their texts is created by combining the authorial voice with varied articulations from the past as well as the present and their interactive role as an observer and participant in recording cultural traditions and social customs has been examined through textual analysis of their writings. Dalrymple’s and Tully’s interest in the social, cultural, political world of India finds expression through the polyphonic-ethnographic mode and the textual analysis reveals that the narratives are structured in segments so that they are expository, interpretive and dialogic in turn.
To conclude, it can be said that Dalrymple and Tully exhibit a judicious mix of journalism, ethnography, religion, culture and history. They foreground India’s pluralist traditions and the spirit of assimilation and acculturation despite factions. The images of India as produced in their travel writings appear realistic and distanced, though they have exercised their prerogative as writers to choose what they want to write about. Despite their British identity, they show a deep understanding of Indian ways and culture and therefore, map its dynamism in the wake of modernization along with enigmatic and palpable reality of orthodoxy, lively traditions and co-existence. Dalrymple and Tully perceive India both as insiders and outsiders and exhibit the spirit of assimilation and syncretism.

Within the limited scope of the present study, a sincere effort was made to examine the images of contemporary India in the selected travel writings of William Dalrymple and Mark Tully. It is hoped that the present study would be relevant and useful for further research in this area.