CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION:
The present study deals with the multiculturalism and transnationalism reflected in the novels of Michael Ondaatje. Michael Ondaatje is a Canadian poet and novelist. He is considered as one of the promising writers of Canada. His novels have won various awards for his contribution to the Canadian literature. His novels depict the theme of identity crisis, diaspora, migration, hybridity, multiculturalism, transnationalism, historiographic metafiction, intertextuality, space, place, alienation, and displacement. His novels depict the people of various cultures living together and coming from different countries. As an immigrant writer, he thinks that all people should live together. Ondaatje’s work highlights his life and importance of immigration. The characters in his novels represent different cultural and racial background. He tries to represent the situation of the contemporary society and wants to change it.

Michael Ondaatje is a multicultural writer who has focused multiculturalism and transnationalism in all his novels with special attention to time and space. He has portrayed in his novel all the marginal characters of the society and their adjustment with the new culture and society. When the migrants cross the border of their country, they develop multiple relationships with the people of the host country. The present study is an attempt to highlight multiculturalism and transnationalism reflected in all the novels of Michael Ondaatje.

Transnationalism represents the identity of the migrants in the home and host country. These migrants face various types of problems in the host country such as violence, exploitation, new identity, language barrier etc. These migrants mix with two and more than two cultures at a time. They get involved in the culture of the new world. So their involvement in the host and home culture makes them multicultural.

2. THESIS STATEMENT:
The present research work entitled A Study of Multiculturalism and Transnationalism in the Novels of Michael Ondaatje investigates multiculturalism and transnationalism reflected in his novels. Multiculturalism is a term used since 1960s to refer to the
complexities of cultural diversity of postcolonial societies. Multiculturalism began first in Canada and later on it spread in various countries like USA, UK, Germany etc. People are migrating from the Third World countries to the First World countries over the last two hundred years. Multiculturalism means to give rights to the minority and marginal people of the society. It tries to bring equality among the people. It tries to overcome the established notion of class struggle. It gives voice to the marginal and minority community.

Transnationalism is a term used by Randolph Bourse in his article Transnational America in 1916. It emphasizes migrants’ social, economic, political and cultural networks which involve both country of origin and country of settlement. Transnationalism not only begins across the border but it also begins within the state. The government representative or individuals or representative of multinational corporations used to organize transnational activities in the nation. These activities varied from economic enterprises to political, cultural and social initiatives. The transnational activities are increased due to the close affinity between transnationalism and globalization. The boundaries between nation-states are becoming less distinct because of globalization. Transnationalism means the dual identity of the migrants.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Michael Ondaatje is a Sri-Lankan born Canadian writer. He has migrated from homeland to Canada at the age of eleven. He is considered as a diasporic writer from different angles. Michael Ondaatje has been critically reviewed from different aspects. Critics have analyzed thematic, structural and formalistic aspects of the novels of Michael Ondaatje. There has been a study of Michael Ondaatje’s prominence in the Canadian Literature. Different aspects like identity, multiculturalism, transnationalism, intertextuality, history, landscape, memory, transnationalism, displacement, migration, theme of estrangement and the creative process are dealt with in his novels. The present study seeks to examine the reflection of multiculturalism and transnationalism in the novels of Michael Ondaatje. The present study will be useful in understanding various thematic concerns and themes on multiculturalism and transnationalism in the novels of Michael Ondaatje. The study is also helpful to the creative writers and young generation for exploring the unfathomable transcultural world. This study will be significant to research methodology of literary
genres. The study is also useful to the foreign travellers and the people who live in multicultural countries. It is also useful for the academicians, researchers and students.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The present thesis analyses multiculturalism and transnationalism in the six novels of Michael Ondaatje. The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To study the contribution of Michael Ondaatje to the Canadian literature.
2. To review briefly Michael Ondaatje as a Canadian writer.
3. To study various aspects of the writing of Michael Ondaatje.
4. To study diaspora and its reflection in Michael Ondaatje’s novels.
5. To study the reflection of multiculturalism in the novels of Michael Ondaatje,
6. To review the reflection of transnationalism in the novels of Michael Ondaatje.

5. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The novelist under study has written totally six novels and the present study will consider all the six novels. The emphasis will be on the theoretical perspective of the diasporic aspect of the novels. Therefore, the objective of the study is limited one.

The following novels will be considered for the present study:

1. Coming through Slaughter (1976)
2. In the Skin of a Lion (1987)
6. The Cat's Table (2011)

The present study focuses on multiculturalism and transnationalism reflected in his novels. It concentrates on various aspects such as marginalization, cultural clashes, portrayal of women, alienation, nostalgia, blurring of the boundaries etc.

6. METHODOLOGY

a) HYPOTHESIS:

- Multiculturalism gives voice and justice to the marginalized people in his novels.
- Multiculturalism redresses the inequalities between minority and majority and also redresses the discrimination of colour, race etc.
- Multiculturalism promotes cultural diversity and cross cultural relationships.
• Transnationalism represents that we are the citizen of the world.
• Transnationalism develops the sense of brotherhood between two or more than two countries.

7. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:
Brenda Glover in his article *Unanchored to the World: Displacement and Alienation in Anil’s Ghost and the Prose of Michael Ondaatje* has depicted the individual experience of the characters. He writes that the contribution of the people for the country is ignored.


Avinash Jodha in his book *Michael Ondaatje’s Fiction: Poetics of Exile* has depicted the multiple negotiations of identity, immigration, multicultural and experience. He also depicted the experience of migrants in transnational world.

John Bolland in his book *Michael Ondaatje’s The English Patient* has depicted the experience of all the four characters in an Italian Villa. These characters come from different countries and live together at Villa.

Victoria Cook in an article *Exploring Transnational Identities in Ondaatje’s Anil’s Ghost* depicts issues of transnational identity and the problems in the cross cultural society.

Glen Lowry in his article *The Representation of ‘Race’ in Ondaatje’s In the Skin of a Lion* discusses the issues related to race and cultural politics of reading and construction of whiteness.

Manav Ratti in his article *Michael Ondaatje’s Anil’s Ghost and the Aestheticization of Human Rights* has depicted the human rights incorporated by Ondaatje in Anil’s Ghost.

By considering these reviews it is clear that some research work is done on Michael Ondaatje’s work and no one has worked on all six novels from the perspective of multiculturalism and transnationalism.

b) **Research Methodology**

The present study is theoretical and the study totally depends on library, books, literary materials and websites. The analytical, interpretation and evaluative methods are used for the present research work. The research topic is analytical, hence it asserts to use various methods to interpret, evaluate and
describe the novels to bring out real research output. The study focuses on the close reading of primary and secondary sources available on the subject.

8. **CHAPTER SCHEME:**

The present research work is divided into seven chapters for the sake of convenience of the study.

**Chapter I: Introduction**

The first chapter focuses on the introduction of Ondaatje and his works. Ondaatje portrays variety of aspects in his novels. His novels deal with multiculturalism and transnationalism. Multicultural study focuses on equal rights to marginal people. It treats all cultures equally. Transnationalism is an activity of the migrants in home and host country. Migrants are seen to have been actively involved in both countries. Due to their involvement in both countries the boundaries of two countries are getting blurred. These migrants have dual identity: the identity of home and the identity of host country.

**Chapter II: Theoretical Framework**

The present chapter focuses on theoretical premise of multiculturalism and transnationalism. It focuses on various views and opinions on multiculturalism and transnationalism. There are many critics and theorists who have discussed on multiculturalism and transnationalism in their critical works. These critics are C.W. Watson, Charles Taylor, Willy Kymlica, Randolph Bourne, Vertovec, E.B.Taylor etc. In addition to this, the other critics Ralph Grillo and Yasmin Alibhau Brown are discussed.

**Chapter III: Reflection of Multiculturalism in Michael Ondaatje Novels:**

*Coming through Slaughter, In the Skin of a Lion and The English Patient.*

The third chapter concentrates on detailed reflection of multiculturalism in Ondaatje’s novels *Coming Through Slaughter, In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient*. All these novels are written in the last phase of 20th century. These novels focus on marginal characters, multicultural relationships and cultural clashes. In these novels, Ondaatje tries to bring equality to the marginal and minority people in the society. He arouses a good deal of interest of the minority people for reading his novels thoroughly. These novels also focus the violence, suffering and exploitation of the marginal people. The novelist
throws light on love relationships among various characters. These love relationships bring cross cultural relationships.

**Chapter IV: Reflection of Multiculturalism in Michael Ondaatje Novels:**

*Anil’s Ghost, Divisadero and The Cat’s Table*

The fourth chapter concentrates on detailed reflection of multiculturalism in Ondaatje’s novels *Anil’s Ghost, Divisadero and The Cat’s Table*. All these novels are written in the beginning of the 21st century. These novels focus on marginal characters, multicultural relationships, cultural clashes. In these novels, he tries to bring equality to the marginal and minority people of the society. He arouses a good deal of interest of the minority people for reading his novels thoroughly. These novels also focus the violence, suffering and exploitation of the marginal people. The novelist throws light on love relationships among various characters. These love relationships bring cross cultural relationships.

**Chapter V: Reflection of Transnationalism in Michael Ondaatje’s Novels:**

*Coming through Slaughter, In the Skin of a Lion and The English Patient.*

The fifth chapter concentrates on detailed reflection of transnationalism in Ondaatje’s novels *Coming Through Slaughter, In the Skin of a Lion and The English Patient*. All these novels are written in the last phase of the 20th century. In these novels, Ondaatje focuses on the different problems of migrants in host country. Migrants face problems such as alienation, nostalgia, language problem, displacement etc. in the host land. Migration to the foreign country brings transnational identity of the characters. These people maintain their relationships with their home country in various ways. They involve in the activities of the host and home country. The feeling of nostalgia, alienation in foreign countries makes them to think about their home country.

**Chapter VI: Reflection of Transnationalism in Michael Ondaatje’s Novels:**

*Anil’s Ghost, Divisadero and The Cat’s Table*

The sixth chapter concentrates on detailed reflection of transnationalism in Ondaatje’s novels *Anils Ghost, Divisadero and The Cat’s Table*. All these novels are written in the beginning of 21st century. There is too much development in advance technology in 21st century. In these novels, Ondaatje focuses on the different problems of migrants in host country. Migrants face problems such as alienation, nostalgia, language problem, displacement etc. in the host land. Migration to the foreign country brings transnational
identity of the characters. These people maintain their relationships with their home country in various ways. They involve in the activities of the host and home country. The feeling of nostalgia, alienation in foreign countries makes them to think about their home country.

**Chapter VII: Conclusion**

This chapter brief survey of the entire process and the summary of the research experience. It highlights on the overall performance of Michael Ondaatje in his novels. The following are the conclusion:

1. His novel tries to bring equality among the people.
2. His novels promote for multicultural relations through cross cultural love relations.
3. The novels try to bring good relationships between two nations.
4. His novels promotes for cultural diversity which is the need of time and tries to give rights to the marginal people.
5. All the characters cross their border to fulfill their dreams.

**9. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:**

- Michael Ondaatje promotes multicultural and transnational relations and tries to create sense of brotherhood among the nations.
- Ondaatje tries to give rights to the marginalized people through the establishment of multicultural relations. He gives more value to the workers and marginalized people in his novels.
- He tries to give power of recognition to the marginalized community.
- He tries to give equality to all the people irrespective of race, religion, colour, creed and gender.
- Multiculturalism redresses the inequalities between minority and majority.
- Nostalgia is prevalent among the migrants about their own homeland.
- Acceptance of cultural diversity, immigrant and minority in a society needs tolerance.
- Migrants adjust in new environment and accept the culture of the migrated country.
Ondaatje’s characters mix their culture with new culture and live in multicultural relations. Migrants face the problems of insider and outsider, language etc.

Migrants cross their country and live in another country. They go beyond their own country and form the transnational relations. They are not the citizen of one country. They become the citizen of the world.

10. LIFE AND WORKS OF MICHAEL ONDAATJE:

Michael Ondaatje is a Sri-Lankan born Canadian poet and novelist. He migrated to Canada after his journey to England as a small boy and to Canada as a mature writer. He expresses his identity through his poems Rat Jelly which tells about his Asian culture. Michael Ondaatje is a postmodern writer. He belongs to Burgher community which is a mixed community of Dutch. He left his country in his early age.

Michael Ondaatje is one of the famous migrant writers of Canada. He is a winner of Booker prize for his novel The English Patient in 1992. He was born on Sept.12, 1943 in Sri Lanka formerly as a Ceylon, in Kegalle, Colombo. He is second son to his parents. He had three brothers named Christopher, Gillian and Janet and two sisters named Jennifer and Susan. His family was well established part of the Ceylon and owned tea plantation.

His father Mervin Ondaatje is alcoholic. He sold most of their ancestral land. He belongs to Burgher community which is a prominent community in Sri Lanka. Michael’s parents divorced in 1945 and his mother moved to Colombo with her son Michael. He completed his school education in St.Thomas Boys School. He left Sri Lanka at the age of nine and went to England where his mother runs boarding school. He kept communication with his father through the correspondence. At the age of nineteen, he migrated to Canada before Canada passed the Multicultural Act.

The Burghers are European colonist who settled in Sri Lanka in 16th Century. In 17th century, the ancestors of Ondaatje arrived in Sri Lanka. The government rewarded them with a land. Ondaatje was two years old when his parents get divorced. His mother faced problem of money in Sri Lanka. So she went to Lancaster. She left Michael and his sister with their relatives. At the age of nine, Michael went to London and joined his mother and older brother. He took admission in Dulwich college. He experiences east west encounters in his early age. Later he migrated to Canada in 1962 with his brother Christopher at the age of nineteen. He took admission for undergraduate programme at
Bishops University in Quebec. He started his career as a poet. He loves Kim who is senior to him and later married to her. He completed B.A. in 1965 and went to Toronto University for further education. His poetry won Ralf Gustafson and Epstein award in 1965 and 1966. He acquired Canadian Citizenship in 1965 and published his poems in Raymond Souster’s Anthology.

He won many international awards for his poetry. He also won E.J. Pratt Gold medal for his poetry. He got a job as a professor at University of Western Ontario. In 1967, he published his first poetry collection Dainty Monsters. His poetry reflects various aspects and themes of modern civilization. In 1967, he published second poetry collection entitled The Man with Seven Toes. In 1971, the third collection of poetry The Collected Works of Billy the Kid was published. He won Governor General Award for his poetry in 1970. He made thirty minutes documentary film on his friend Nichol. He submitted M. A. thesis on Mythology in the poetry of Edvin Muir: A Study on the Making and Using of Mythology in Edwin Muir’s Poetry in 1967. He got a job as a professor at Glendon College, York University. He read about Buddy Bolden in a newspaper clipping and wrote his first novel Coming Through Slaughter on Buddy Bolden in 1976. This novel won Canada First Novel Award. This novel depicts the conditions of marginal and minority people in New Orleans. The novel depicts the legendary figure Buddy Bolden and E.J. Bellocq. Ondaatje depicts his own conditions through the character Buddy Bolden.

In 1978, he won Governor General Award for his poetry collection, “There is a Trick with a Knife I am learning to do”. He wrote a memoir Running in the Family in 1982. He visited Sri Lanka several times in search of his past history. He interviewed many people such as relatives, friends, family members to get right information. He met television journalist Linda Spalding in University of Hawaii in 1981. In the next year, he separated from his wife. He wrote two poems Tin Roof and Secular Love which depicts his painful experience of separation.

He published a novel In the Skin of a Lion in 1987 after the gap of five years. This novel depicts the story of immigrant workers and labourers. This novel brought him national and international recognition. This novel won Order of Canada Award. The English Patient his third novel published in the year 1992 which won booker prize in 1992. This
novel depicts the story of migrants in western country. Anthony Minghella directed a film version of this novel and this novel won nine Oscar awards. He published Handwriting a collection of poetry after six years. In 2007, Ondaatje published his fourth novel Anil’s Ghost. This novel depicts the story of Sri Lanka, Tamils and Sinhalese. He was honoured with Sri Lankan famous Ratna Award at the auspicious hands of former Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga in 1988. In 2007, Ondaatje published his fifth novel Divisadero. This novel depicts the estrangement of family and their relationships. His last novel The Cat’s Table was published in the year 2011. It is a semi-autobiographical novel which depicts about Ondaatje himself.

Coming through Slaughter depicts the story of two legendary figures Buddy Bolden and E.J.Bellocq. Both belong to marginal section of the society. The history of these people is not written in any book of the country. Ondaatje tries to give voice to these marginal figures in his novel. The author narrated the society of New Orleans.

In the Skin of a Lion depicts the story of immigrants who came to Toronto in search of work. Ondaatje brings cross cultural relations of various characters who came from different sections of the society. He also focuses on transnational identity of various workers. Patrick, Nicholas, Caravaggio etc came from different country in the city of Toronto. The novel focuses on the construction of Toronto, Prince Edward Viaduct and Water Plant. The migrants who devoted their life for the construction of these three historical monuments are omitted from the official history of Toronto.

The English Patient set in Italian Villa during the Second World War. The novelist brought four characters from different country in Italian villa. He tries to depict the multicultural and transnational community through these characters. The novel focuses on identity of each character. The novel ends with bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Anil’s Ghost was published in the year 2000. It depicts Sri Lankan land with murder, death, burial and reburial, political killings etc. Anil Tissera undertakes a journey to Sri Lanka as an anthropologist to investigate the death or murder of many people. She is the agent of Human Rights development and she is joined by Sarath and Gamini in Sri Lanka.

Ondaatje’s latest novel Divisadero set in California where people came in search of gold mine. The novel is about Anna, Claire and Coop who are living on a Petaluma farm with
their father. They migrated to various places after family clashes. Anna does research on French poet, Lucien Segura. The novel depicts transnational identity, multiculturalism, cross cultural relations etc.

Ondaatje’s last novel The Cat’s Table published in the year 2011. This novel depicts the story of Michael who undertakes a journey from Sri Lanka to England to meet his mother. This novel depicts the story of Michael Ondaatje’s migration to England at the age of nine. Michael is assigned the cat’s table a least privilege place on the ship Oronsay.

These novels of Michael Ondaatje depict transnational identity and explore multicultural relations. His novels depict identity crisis, exile, immigration, multiculturalism, historiographic metafiction etc. The postmodern and postcolonial themes are reflected in his novels. As a Canadian author, Ondaatje crossed the boundary of his nation and wrote his own problems through his novels. The present thesis proves how these concepts are reflected in his novels.