CHAPTER IV

THE REFLECTION OF MULTICULTURALISM IN MICHAEL ONDAATJE’S NOVELS: ANIL’S GHOST, DIVISADERO AND THE CAT’S TABLE

4.1.1 Introduction:
The present chapter focuses on the multicultural views in the novels of Michael Ondaatje. The novels Anil’s Ghost, Divisadero and The Cats Table are considered in this chapter. Multiculturalism is reflected in the novels of Michael Ondaatje. Sheffer in his book Modern Diaspora in International Politics writes:

The ethnic factor is decisive. The religious ingredients would only help to strengthen some ideological, cultural and emotional identification and relation with former home country. (Sheffer, 39)

Ondaatje’s characters migrate from their country and lives in the west. They have mixed with the host culture and keep relation with their home country. Avinash Jodha writes in his book:

Anil’s Ghost is an expatriate’s journey into the landscape of origin beyond the personal relationships and nostalgia to seek a newer belonging and responsibility. (Jodha, 164)

4.1.2 Multiculturalism in Anil’s Ghost
Michael Ondaatje depicts multiculturalism and transnationalism in his novels. It is necessary to study the brief summary of the novels to understand multiculturalism and transnationalism. The summary is discussed briefly as follows:
Anil’s Ghost is a fourth novel of Michael Ondaatje. The novel is published in the year 2000. The novel depicts the flight of Anil from Eastern to Western country and her involvement in the culture of west. The novel starts with a Sri Lankan miner’s folk song which is made up of two poems taken from an essay by Rex A. Cassinada. It represents struggle of individuals for survival in the lifecycle. The first stanza designates all the dangers a miner faces, with ‘only when I return to the surface / is my life safe’. The second stanza describes a blessing on everything that comprises inherent dangers: the scaffolding, the wheel on the pit head and the chains attached to the wheel.
Ondaatje depicts the history of Sri Lankan Civil War. The unlimited violence took the life of innocent people. Anil is a forensic anthropologist migrated to America fifteen years ago. Now she is working for the Human Rights department. She returns to her country Sri Lanka after fifteen years as a forensic anthropologist. Michael Ondaatje depicts the true picture of Sri Lanka but the characters are fictitious. He projects many mass killings in Sri Lanka. He wants to make aware all the people about inequalities in their country and motivates them to take part in the struggle to bring justice for them.

Sri Lanka is ruled by many European countries and also ruled by India. It is culturally diverse country in the world. Anil returns after fifteen years to her home country. She expects that everything is different in Colombo. But the world is more complicated morally. Anil could not understand the language spoken by granddaughter of Lalita. She faces the cultural problem in Sri Lanka.

She faces the problem of language in America and in her own country. The barrier of language is seen in this novel. Anil and Sarath both belong to different community and work together. The culture of the east and the west is encountered in this novel. Anil and Sarath are working for the Human Rights Organization. They are searching for the skeleton of sailor. They are searching for the murderer. They went to different places in search of more skeletons which were buried. They try to find out who is the murderer whether the government or anybody else. They find out the dead body which is buried in the archaeological sites.

4.1.3 Theme of Marginalization:

Anil Tissera, a Sri Lankan, 33 yrs old, forensic anthropologist, left her homeland at the age of 18 and returns to it after 15 years later to a different country than she had left and she tries to reunite the two cultures with one another. She has returned to her native island, Sri Lanka after her fifteen years stay in the West. Now in her home land, she is marginal figure.

Anil borrowed her name from her brother. Anil is a male name. She has crossed many ideological boundaries by adopting male name instead of female name. She has tried to establish her own identity in this patriarchal society and in their culture. It indicates that in the women are treated marginal figure in the patriarchal society. In the following lines we come to know how she adopted the name:
She had been given two entirely inappropriate names and very early began to desire. Anil which was her brother’s unused second name. She had tried to buy it from him when she was twelve years old, offering to support him in all family arguments. He would not commit himself to the trade though he knew she wanted the name more than anything else. [63]

Robert Kroetsch talks about the problem of identity: “Not so much that of knowing one’s identity as it is that of how to relate that newly evolving identity to its inherited or ‘given’ names.” [Kroetsch 1989,51] Anil has borrowed her name from her brother by providing sexual favour with her brother. The physical relations between brother and sister are recognized as incest in eastern country. Ondaatje writes:

She gave her brother one hundred saved rupees, a pen set he had been eyeing for some time, a tiny of fifty Gold Leaf cigarettes she had found, and a sexual favour he had demanded in the last hours of the impasse. (64)

The culture of patriarchal society is reflected in the novel. Anil adopted male name because male is given too much importance in the patriarchal society. She thinks that male name will pay the role of patriarchy. Ondaatje writes:

Everything about the name pleased her, its slim, stripped down quality, its feminine air, even though it was considered a male name. Twenty years she felt the same about it. She had hunted down the desired name like a specific lover she had seen and wanted, tempted by nothing else along the way. (64)

Anil is in search of name. She lived with this name twenty years. Her desire for the name is like a lover she had seen and wanted. Anil and Sarath find out various skeletons. They gave them names like tinker, tailor, soldier and sailor. The westerner shows supremacy over the easterner. These names represent the marginalized people in the society. Ondaatje writes:

To fetch a dead body: what a curious task! To cut down the corpse of an unknown hanged man and then bear the body of the animal on one’s back… something dead, something buried, something already rotting away? Who was he? This is representative of all those lost voices. (52)
Sailor is a representative of all marginalized people in the society. He is a representative of the people who lost their identity. John Bolland writes about the quest of Sailor in his book:

It is the quest to reconstitute “Sailor”--his appearance, manner and place of work, the location and form of his execution—that becomes the central metaphor of the novel, representing the possibility that the marginalized subject might yet outface the attempt by the powerful to elide his presence from the official account. (Bolland, 85)

Anil investigates reality in Sri Lanka. She visited many places with Sarath to find out truth. Sarath and Palipna encounter at the time of archaeological expedition in a cave images of a woman with a child. Sarath connects grief and affection of past reality of mother for her child with the grief and affection of present reality for his homeland. He comes to the conclusion that reality is hidden into the skeleton. The hidden skeleton is a historical and cultural fact.

4.1.4 Theme of Cultural Clashes:

Anil Tissera, the protagonist of the novel occupies a very similar position like the writer in relation to Sri Lanka. The narration is about the insider and outsider at the same time exposing cultural conflicts between Eastern and Western ideologies. The novel exposes the dichotomy between Eastern and Western culture which is evident in the central character. She is treated as a marginal figure because she is unable to speak in the language of Sri Lanka.

Anil’s Ghost is set at the time of Sri Lanka’s civil conflict and focuses on a period between mid1980s and early 1990s. At that time, the government was contesting between Tamils and Sinhalese. This novel is about Sri Lanka, native place of the author as well as about all cultures that try to destroy or hide the truth.

The Novel Anil’s Ghost is about the people of an island who are trapped in a deadly civil war. Anil has returned as a forensic anthropologist as an envoy of the Geneva, Switzerland based Centre for Human Rights. Ondaatje describes the arrival of Anil after fifteen years. Anil travelled all over the world for different reasons. She returns to the same world whose language she has lost in a lengthy exile to England and America. She feels victory by Colombo’s smells and sounds on the journey from the airport. She waits
more than a decade to come back like an author. She spent fifteen years away from Sri Lanka.

Anil is continuously on the move as a forensic anthropologist. Her first journey to England is for the purpose of education. This movement is important both culturally and geographically. Her refutation of Eastern culture is another way in which she endeavors to forge her own identity. In the West, she immersed herself into the idea of privacy. She tells most interesting thing about the West that she can do anything on her own terms and she says she misses her privacy.

Brenda Glover writes in his article ‘Unanchored to The World: Displacement and Alienation in Anil’s Ghost and the prose of Michael Ondaatje’ about Anil:

In this novel, Ondaatje juxtaposes fragments of a remembered past with present time lived experience from the perspective of young woman, Anil Tissera, who returns to Sri Lanka after fifteen years of Education in America, to work as a forensic anthropologist on an investigation of human right abuses. (Glover, 76)

Anil wandered from one place to another and mixed with a variety of culture. She finally returns to her own culture. She learnt variety of culture. She also refuses to be called as anything, including a Sri Lankan or Canadian, because of the fear of people controlling her. She came to Sri Lanka as a forensic anthropologist. Sri Lanka was facing the problem of clash of cultures. Lee Spinks writes in his book:

Anil’s Ghost is set during period between 1983 and 1987 of the war, when the struggle between the Tamil minority and the state- a struggle that encompassed appalling terrorist atrocities y the LTTE and savage and often indiscriminate acts of government reprisal-threatened to plunge the entire country into a modern inferno. (Spinks,207)

Michael Ondaatje’s Anil’s Ghost is recognized as an effect of multiculturalism on Ondaatje’s construction of identity. He has created Anil’s feminine and cultural identities fluid and complicated. Anil Tissera, is a heroine of the novel, born in Sri Lanka and completed education in the West. She comes back to her native land after fifteen years as an agent. She returns as an archaeological anthropologist and joins with a local
archaeologist Sarath Diyasena. Anil is the name of boy, but she adopted boy name. It means women are treated marginal figure.
All the characters migrated from their home country and living in a host country. Their culture is mixed with each other. Anil is the protagonist of the novel. Anil married a man who is from Sri Lanka in United States. She lived in USA, but wandered all over the world as a forensic anthropologist. She married to the man who belongs to her own culture. This homesickness represents her desire for her own culture.
Her marriage with a man from Sri Lanka indicates that she wants to keep her traditional culture alive. Here she was mixed with the eastern and western culture. She tries to establish her home culture in America.
Anil was in contact with Sarath Diyasena. They came very close together while working for the Human Right. The erotic tension developed between them. Sarath takes care of Anil when she was ill. This fondness was developed between eastern and western culture. Anil is mixed with the western culture in USA. Their relation can be seen as a symbol of eastern and western unity. She behaves like a western people. Ondaatje describes her westernness in the following lines: One postcard from Leaf. One American bird. She pulled some cutlets and a beer out of the fridge. There would be a book to read, a shower to take.” (29)
Later she visited Galle Face Green and enters into a new hotel and watches the drunkers. Anil is seen westerner from different point of view. Her pattern of living shows she is westerner. Her staying in luxury hotels, enjoying cooled beer and participating in cricket teams shows the culture of West. Sarath understands the culture of his country i.e. eastern culture.
Palipana treats history and cultural fact as multilayered object. He tells about stone remnants such as water gardens, royal bathing pools, the buried cities and the nationalistic fervor. It gives satisfaction to him and other who worked with him including. These arts or things give them to find out the past reality.
4.1.5 Theme of Violence, Suffering and Humiliation:
Violence and suffering is portrayed in this novel. People were killed and buried in unknown places. Anil Tissera was in search of these political killings. She and Sarath
investigate the dead body of Sailor. Anil came after fifteen years as agent of human rights. Ondaatje describes the arrival of Anil in Sri Lanka after fifteen years:

She arrived in early March, the plane landing at Katunayake airport before the dawn. They had raced it ever since coming over the west coast of India, so that now passengers stepped onto the tarmac in the dark. (5)

Anil has visited to the several places. She travelled to London for education and later to Canada where she lived more than fifteen years. Now she returned to her homeland. When she arrived in Sri Lanka, she came to know about the place from Palipana. Palipana tells it is the place of a complete crime. People’s head are separated from bodies and the hands are also broken. Sri Lanka is the place where many crimes happened. Many people were killed and their bodies are separated from the head. Ondaatje portrays these terrible incidents in his novel. There is continuous emergency from 1983 onwards, there were racial attacks and political killings and the guerrillas are fighting for homeland in the north. The bodies are burnt or thrown into the river or sea or hiding and reburial of the corpses. Ondaatje writes:

It was a Hundred Years War with modern weaponry, and backers on the sidelines in safe countries, a war sponsored by gun and drug runners. It became evident that political enemies were secretly joined in financial arms deals. The reason for war was war. (39)

Avinash Jodha writes in his book:

In Sri Lanka there has been demand for separate Tamil Eelem by the Tamils the largest minority group in the country. The clash has resulted in thousands of deaths, never ending terror and the existence of a nation within nation with understood but officially unacknowledged boundaries.

(Jodha, 152)

Ondaatje depicted the violence and suffering of people in his novel. The people are fighting for their demand. The clashes between Tamil and Sinhalese resulted in thousands of death. Anil believes that meaning allowed a person a door to escape grief and fear. People are in fear, they could not give any information because of fear. Ondaatje writes:

In a fearful nation, public sorrow was stamped down by the climate of uncertainty. If a father protested a son’s death, it was feared another
family member would be killed. If people you knew disappeared, there was a chance they might stay alive if you did not cause trouble. This was the scarring psychosis in the country. Death, loss, was unfinished so you could not walk through it. (52)

There are murders and kidnapping of people in the daylight. The people of the country could not give any information because of the fear and grief. If it continues people are killed in a broad daylight. Anil investigates the body of the Sailor. Sailor’s one forearm was broken and his body was partially burned, damaged in the neck and possibility of a small bullet wound in his skull. Many people were killed in this way. Murder, bloodshed and political killings are portrayed in this novel. This type of crime is not limited to Sri Lanka, it also happened at different places. Avinash Jodha writes:

She has worked in different spaces, Guatemala, Congo and is aware there are other places wounded by similar crimes, other places being converted into vast burial grounds. And there is the awareness that while she and Sarath burrow into the past to establish the identity of sailor, the landscape around them receives newer bodies. (Jodha, 155)

It is necessary to investigate to stop further violence and murders. Day and night she investigates the reason behind the murder of these people. Once there was a plague, many people died and they were buried. Anil says:

But we are not even sure of this, because most of them were burned in the last century, these ones in the historical gravesites. As you know, there was a plague there in 1856. Another in 1890. Many were burned.

(270-271)

Many people died in the epidemic of Plague in the year 1856 and 1890. These people are buried and many people are burned. Anil finds hundred years old skeleton in the archaeological sites. Lee Spinks writes in his book:

Upon closer inspection these bones reveal a mixture of trace elements and evidence of transverse cracking or possible signs of violence which suggest the body was tortured, killed, buried, then disinterred and removed to its present secluded location. (Spinks, 211)
The sign of violence is seen on the body which is buried many years before. It indicates the body is tortured and reburied from one place to another.

4.1.6 Theme of Multicultural Relationships:

The love relationships between man and woman can be viewed as a multicultural relation. Michael Ondaatje depicted love relationships in his novel Anil’s Ghost. Anil and Cullis relationship in the novel can be seen transcultural. It destroys the cultural boundaries between East and West. The transcultural identity of Anil includes both Western order and Eastern disorder. Anil likes the western towards identification and assumption and eastern concern and desire consent her open to pretend Cullis both physically and emotionally. In his marriage sits in the car that stand for restraints forced by a fixed cultural identity on Cullis. She constructs her own identity and allows herself to be an embodiment of Western culture.

The effect of multiculturalism on individual and the writer explores some of the disparities between the culture of East and West. An unsuccessful marriage of Anil to a Sri Lankan in England at the time of his study is an important incident in this context. Her husband is a jealous character:

At first this presented itself as a sexual jealousy, then she saw it as an attempt to limit her research and studies. It was the first handcuff of marriage, and it almost buried her. (240)

She divorces her husband who restricts her freedom. She keeps an affair with a married man Cullis. She breaks the constraints of marriage life. Their relations are so tight that Cullis had no control over her identity. Anil’s dealing of her marriage is illicit and embarrassed too much. She suffered in her married life also.

Anil is primarily reliant on the cultural and individual identity given to her by her parents. However, she transfers into a self-governing stage gesticulated by her craving for a different name and her implementation of a dissimilar culture. At last she transfers into the third stage of interdependency. Her return migration to Sri Lanka can be seen through the multicultural point of view.

Her journey to different places allowed her to change the structure of her nature and her temperament. She thinks that it is crucial to control over her identity. She is not interested to stay at one place for long time. She thinks that people will not tag her Sri Lankan or
Londoner. She doesn’t mention her husband’s name. It is a way to remove him from her life who attempted to rule her. She breaks the marriage bond and even doesn’t desire any control over her recollections.

Anil’s task to find sailor is incompatible to all that she stands in her own life. She struggles to permit nobody to describe her; she is concurrently on a task to classify someone else. The first important step is to name the remnants i.e. Sailor. Anil disallowed her own name and she understands it will to give this man. Her battle to identify herself with this name made her irrelevant. By giving the name to the remains as Sailor, she has allowed others to label her. She has to accept this fact.

All the characters are reconstructing the life of the people who missed in the war. The Eastern and Western ideologies are evident through the opinions of Anil and Sarath. Ondaatje portrays the encounter which affects both Anil and Sarath. Both are not able to remain who they are; each affecting and influencing the other. So the writer points out the need for more interactions and blurring of boundaries between nations.

Anil is totally involved in the western culture. She drinks cooled beer, stays in luxury hotels and participates in cricket teams. She uses recent technological approaches in her work. Sarath yearns to discover and fathom lost cities. She says:

Not a wall of it remained, but he wanted to tell the story of that place…his knowledge of the region in chronicles- its medieval business routes, its presence as a favourite monsoon town of a certain king. (245)

Ondaatje has described Gamini and Sarath who moved continuously throughout the different world and mixed with the different cultures. He described that both Gamini and Sarath were living in another country. The description is as follows:

The two Colombo brothers,’ And she in some way like a sister between them, keeping them from mauling each other’s world? Wherever she might be, would she think of them? Consider the strange middle class pair who were born into one world and in midlife stepped waist deep into another.( 282)

Ondaatje mixes both eastern and western culture in multimodal fragments in the mythological imagery and religion. The cave paintings of woman and child reminds of the Madona and the Child. The writer has used Eastern and Western symbols.
Anil comes back to Sri Lanka after fifteen years. She is away from her native language. She is not able to speak in the language of Sri Lanka. The loss of language shows her aloofness from her own culture. She visited Lalita’s house. She kissed Lalitha on both cheeks. Lalitha granddaughter interrupts their conversation. Ondaatje writes:

Anil could understand only a few words when it was spoken, relying mostly on the manner of the speech to understand what they were saying. She would once said something to a stranger who had met her sentence with blank stare and had then been told that because of her lack of tone the listener didn’t understand the remark. (19)

Anil lost the connection of her language due to her migration to different countries. Anil’s flight from Sri-Lanka to different places shows her multicultural roots and her fifteen years stay in western country makes her an international character. She came in contact with different cultures in west. She is more western and less eastern. But in America she displays the features of a Sri Lankan. Neil Bissondath writes in his article about the importance of journey to the land of origin. Anil travels to her native land after fifteen years. He writes:

For many the journey is inevitable: establishing oneself in a new land is always difficult; the effort can make the land left behind seem idyllic, and often only renewed contact will evoke the reasons for initial departure and at last cast the new land and the life it offers in a sharper, more compelling light. It is a sentimental journey that many, and even most immigrants must make before they can truly move on with their lives. (126)

It is very difficult to establish an identity in the new land. Here Anil returned to her native land as a forensic anthropologist. She and Sarath worked for the forensic department. They are in search of the murdered man. For this they have migrated from one place to another place and cross the ideological boundaries of many cultures.

The novelist portrays the true picture of the society. He gives the message of non-violence by projecting the violent incidents. He also tries to give equal status to the women and the minority people. The love relationships between the characters bring multicultural relations. He gives a message to accept multicultural society.
4.2 MULTICULTURALISM IN *DIVISADERO*

4.2.1 Introduction:

Michael Ondaatje’s fifth novel *Divisadero* was published in the year 2007. *Divisadero* portrays the marginal figures and their sufferings. This novel is divided into three parts i.e Anna, Claire and Coop. The Family in the Cart and The House in Demu. People migrated from their home land to host land to fulfil their dreams. This novel portrays condition of migrants in host land and problems faced by them. The novel is set during the Californian gold rush. People migrated from their country in search of gold. They migrated to California and their culture became hybrid one. The story of Anna, Claire and Coop took place in the landscapes of California and France.

All these characters migrated from their original homeland to this Petaluma farm. Ann and Claire are unknown to Coop. They don’t know about Coop. They are not sure what he thinks about their family and he is the endangered heir of murder. Anna’s father caught both Anna and Coop while they were in love. Father beats Coop violently and Coop is wounded. He beats him with a stool till the blood come out of his mouth. This incident changed the life of Anna, Claire and Coop.

This incident changed the life of Anna, Coop and Claire. They migrated to different places after this incident and mixed with the culture of other country. The incident creates a vast vacuum in their hearts. Anna migrated to France to do the research on the life of Lucien Segura. Coop migrated to Tahoe and Anna to France. Coop started playing Cards Coop is unknown to this place He does not know about the movies which they were discussing. Coop came in contact with a Dorn who is a famous gambler. Dorn invited him to join in Nevada City. All the characters took an escape routes from the past life. Lucien Segura also escaped from his family and lived in a forest with different name.

Anna met Raphael a self-centered man who is living happily in his life. They live together and spend their more time together. Everything is natural and Raphael falls in love with her. But she keeps herself away from Raphael. She avoids intimacy with Raphael.

Claire works as a researcher for four years in San Francisco and later returns to the Petaluma Farm where her father lives. She eats with her father and walks alone on the farm. So she has not kept any relationships with Anna.
Ondaatje portrays cultural clashes in his novel. All the characters migrated to different places. They face the problem of language. Coop faces problem in speaking with Anna and Clarire. Coop speaks in a low pitched monologue and his speech is not clear. His knowledge of physical world is good but in language he is the student of Anna and Claire. Anna ancestors migrated to San Francisco. The novel depicts the cultural clashes of various characters. It also depicts the life of Lucien Segura, Anna, Claire and Coop. Divisadero is a fifth novel of Michael Ondaatje. The theme of multiculturalism is depicted in this novel. The various aspects of multiculturalism are dealt in this novel. They are marginalization, cultural clashes, violence, suffering and humiliation etc.

4.2.2 Theme of Marginalization:
Marginalization means any community living away from the mainstream of the society. Ondaatje’s novel Divisadero explored the theme of multiculturalism. Spanish immigrants arrived and set up many hotels at the time of Californian gold rush. The immigrants came in search of gold and lived in the mountains for few days. They depended on rabbits, cattle and bear they hunted with shot guns and pistols. The writer explains the dilemma of the immigrants as follows:

And many headed civilization arrived. Gamblers, water entrepreneurs, professional shootouts, prostitutes, diarists, coffee drinkers, whisky merchants, poets, heroic dogs, mail order brides, women falling in love with boys… old men swallowing gold to conceal it on their return journeys to the coast balloonists, mystics, Lola Montez, opera singers—good ones, bad ones, those who fornicated their way across the territory.

(13)

Divisadero is a word borrowed from Spanish. It means division or to look from a long distance. It is also a street in France which divides the civilians and the military base. Divisadero is situated in the border between California and San Francisco. The families portrayed in the novel are divided and the novel is given an appropriate title ‘Divisadero’. Anna’s new abode in Divisadero Street and she narrates her abode:

I come from Divisadero Street. Divisadero, from Spanish means division that one time was the dividing line between San Fransisco and the fields of
Presido. Or it might derive from the word ‘divisar’ meaning ‘to gaze at something from a distance.’ (There is a height nearby called El Divisadero. (142)

The novel depicts the painful story of Anna. This painful story is about marginalized people in the society. Anna lives in the Petaluma road, a rural area in the Southern California, with her father and sister and the hired hand. All three are brought up as siblings but Anna is the only biological daughter of her father. A Cooper family lives with their hundred goats in Petaluma. Their goats live sometimes in Anna’s field. This family is the family of Shepherd means the minority family.

All the characters in the novel migrated constantly from one place to another place and the migration shows their multicultural relations at different places. After the violence, all the three Anna, Claire and Coop are displaced from the small settlement of Petaluma and have lost connection. Their displacement leads them to live in isolation. Coop started his life in Tahoe as a gambler. He is a compulsive risk taker; dangerous even to himself and his group in Tahoe is like a temporary community.

The novelist depicted marginal characters in his novel. He depicted gamblers in his novel. Cooper arrived in Tahoe and he is treated as an inferior and called as ‘hippie’. Hippie means healthiest person in the casino. The depiction of these people means to show the reality to the society. Dorn was very famous person in playing card. He came from Sierras and playing in Tahoe. Ondaatje tells about him:

Dorn, slouching and robust, was the most collected card player to come down from the Sierras. He had a theory that two hours of handball a day justified and cancelled the drinking and cocaine and sitting in the presence of smokers during the long evenings. (41)

The novelist also portrays a thief as a marginal. People are treated thief as inferior in the society. Rafael is son of thief. He informs about the culture of the thief. He says:

My father was known by some as a thief, he said, as though he had read her mind about how he was looking around the room. But he never stole from houses he was invited into. (70)

It shows that thief is civilized. Thief never steals anything from the houses where he is invited. His father taught him such things.
In the patriarchal society, women are treated inferior to men. Women are treated as a commodity. People watch them like a thing. Cooper watches a woman like a commodity. Ondaatje writes:

The woman, in her black and white checked woolen shirt, and with legs that barely seemed to fit under the table, was almost six feet tall as Cooper anyway, and she was a ripple of energy. She would leap up and talk to the staff, or check a name or a date on one of the posters tacked to the wall and come back with information for her partner. (112)

Women are treated as a marginal figure in the patriarchal society. They are given secondary status and are treated inferior to men. Rafael treats Anna as an inferior and he behaves badly against her. Ondaatje quotes:

The fingers of his right hand swept over the strings, six notes spreading towards her like a fan. He smiled briefly at her, then fell into a melody and seemed to be playing everything—bells drums, a missing voice. (68)

Men treated women inferior to them. They should be given equal status and equal rights. They should not be seen as a commodity.

4.2.3 The theme of Violence, Suffering and Humiliation:

Violence, Suffering and Exploitation are prevalent in this novel. The violence against the marginal people of the society is depicted in this novel. In the beginning of the novel, Ondaatje describes the murder of Cooper family. Anna, Claire and Coop are living happily at Petaluma farm. This happiness is destroyed by the violence. The following paragraph is a narration on the same:

The Cooper family was killed by a hired hand who beat them to death with a wooden board. At first no one knew who had committed such act, but their son had hidden in the crawl space under the floorboards of the house for several days. He was four years old and he came out eventually and told who had done it. We took the boy in to stay and work on the form. (10)

Avinash Jodha writes about the violent incident which made all the characters to disperse from the place. He writes, “Anna, Coop and Claire after that violent incident disperse into different directions and spaces; first as a compulsion and later as an escape.” (Jodha, 176)
Anna loses her mother at birth, Claire an orphan adopted girl and Coop the hired hand and Anna’s father form a community in the farm house. Coop, the hired hand becomes one of the family members of Anna and he helps the family to lead happy life. Avinash Jodha in his book Poetics of Exile writes about the family. He says family depicted in the novel is orphan. He writes:

Divisadero, in many ways, is homed by orphans. Anna loses her mother at her birth, Claire is also a child of a mother who died giving birth to her and Coop too is orphaned at an early age. (Jodha, 176)

Ondaatje depicts the painful story of the marginal characters in his novel. All the major characters in his novel are orphans. His novel depicts the story of marginal characters through which he tries to bring equality in the society.

Coop is prompt in his duties. Social removal of Coop is rooted in the horror of his parent’s murder. Still he feels that he comes from nowhere. This upset makes him to read the stories of gold camps and gold mines in the California northeast. He learns about the people who discovered a fortune in river bend. Both Anna and Claire grow having their own separate identity. Anna is very conscious of her identity:

We had stepped suddenly into the large uncertain world of adults and `we would now need to be distinctly Anna and distinctly Claire. It becomes important not to be known as the sisters of - or worse, mistaken for- the other. (19)

Elizabeth Waddell writes in her review about the identity of Anna and Claire:

It is clear that the girls constantly seek out these distinctions only because they have no their separate identities. And knows herself identity is grounded in her relation to Claire.

(http://quarterlyconversation.com)

Both Anna and Claire are in love with each other. Their love is genuine one. Claire’s father violently attacked on both of them and beat him heavily. Burning of the tunnels is also reflected in this novel. This type of violence is prevalent in this novel. Ondaatje describes it as follows:

Dynamiters blasted steep grades and the land under your feet. There were seventeen miles of tunnels beneath the town of Iowa Hill. Sonora burned.
Weaverville burned, Shasta and Columbia burned. Were rebuilt and burned again and rebuilt again. Sacramento flooded. (13) All these are the places of migrants. These places are burnt and blasted to make these people suffer. More than five thousand gold miners live along with the banks of the river Yuba and Russian. The horror is everywhere. On this riverbank two brothers kill each other for the travelling directions.
The exploitation and insult of the migrants is also prevalent in western countries. Migrants bear everything in foreign countries. Cooper insulted the people in Tahoe area. Ondaatje writes:

Cooper had spoken to almost no one since he had arrived. Now, in thirty seconds, he realized he had managed to insult one of the smartest and most anarchic players in Tahoe, who, the rumour went, had twice skunked David Mamet in a game. (42)

Anna and Coop are in love with each other. In patriarchal society, this type of love relationship is prohibited. Ondaatje described horrible scene of this love. He describes: “The weather was strange that day, the heat interrupted by gusts of wind, and they watched the flags bucking, almost breaking loose.” (30) Anna’s father caught her red handed and beat Coop very violently. Ondaatje describes:

Her father walked towards him, with a three legged stool, and swung it into his face. The boy fell back through the collapsing wall of glass into the cabin……Then her father was kneeling above Coop, reaching for the stool again and smashing it down, until the body was completely still. (31)

Ondaatje portrays the violent incident in the life of both Anna and Coop. Coop was injured and the father was thinking to kill him. He fell unconscious and once more he smashed the stool on his chest and blood came out of his mouth. Violent incidents are portrayed in this novel. Coop moved to Tahoe area and came in contact with the gamblers. Dorn is one of the famous gamblers in the Tahoe area. He says,

It was a world where you needed to quickly forgive. You found yourself drinking with hit men or smack dealers who might have killed someone with an eight ball the previous week. (45)
Ondaatje has portrayed bloodshed, murder and political killings in the novel. He gives a message of non-violence to the people.

4.2.4 The theme of Cultural Clashes:

The novel is traced back to a century before in August 1849, the time of Californian gold rush. It was a part of Alta in upper California named by the natives as valley of the hills. Later people immigrated from all over the world for a better living and in search of gold. The place is currently called Petaluma and they built cabins at Badger Hill and started searching for Gold. All the immigrated people lived happily and the people from different cultural background mixed and formed the multicultural relations.

At the time of Coop, more than five thousand gold miners arrived and stay at the banks of Yuba and Russia. Coop was interested in searching for gold and the girls knew the dangerous encounter he is up to; they maintained his secret when he came with some sprain or the other. Many people migrated to this country at the time of Californian Gold rush and they mixed with variety of cultures. This mixing of variety of cultural people bring cultural clashes among the society.

Cooper migrated to the Tahoe area where he finds the people from different culture. His mixing with the people of different culture brings the cultural clashes. Anna father beats Coop for his love with Anna. He loves his daughter too much and he had made some future plan for his daughters. Because of this incident Anna leaves the place and migrated to France where she started studying. In France, she started her life reading manuscripts and books on the life of Lucien Segura. She is away from her American roots and everything is new for her. She met a postman, Monsieur Q and his wife, Madam Q in France. Both guided her about the French life and culture. Once she asked the postman which places are watchable in France. He showed her a map he had drawn with the best paths and routes. In this strange land, she always carries with her a map and it is a keeper for her. Ondaatje writes about this:

> Anna carried the map with her as she walked. Since the day she had met the four hunters, she wore jeans instead of a skirt and shaved ten minutes off the ninety minute walk. But where she was now, alongside the gorse hedges, the path was uneven, broken with stones, and she needed to slow down. (66)
In France, she changed her life style. She wore jeans instead of skirts. It indicates that she likes the life of France and she adopts the culture of France. She was enjoying her life in France. There was nothing in the house of Lucien Segura which reminds her of North America. There was not such thing which remembers her past life such as acquaintances, deadlines etc. There is only one thing that jostled her. She says:

   The only thing that had truly jostled her in the time she had spent so far in the Gers region of France was the group of men at the crossroads with their dogs, the men’s tongues lolling in parody and their fists twisting in the air as she walked away.( 66)

She spent her life in a Gers region of France. Here she has faced the problem of cultural clashes. The people are walking with the dogs and their tongues are twisting while observing her.

Rafael’s father also is not from France. He is also migrated from his homeland to France. The culture of France is different for him. Rafael tells Anna:

   He is not from France. But after the war she didn’t go home instead he met my mother. He was injured in the war. He later organized a small group who fliched- is that the word?-from the houses they were not asked into. It had been difficult during the war, and I think he felt that everyone who had fought was owed more that they were give. (71)

Rafael and his father migrated to France. His father met his mother in France and married her. He mixed with the culture of the France.

4.2.5 The theme of Multicultural Relationships:

The novelist depicted multicultural relationships among the various characters. The novelist portrays the love relationship between Coop and Claire. Ondaatje writes that at the time of Coop’s gold rush fascinations, he sees that gold mining gives him ecstasy and opportunity. Coop was taciturn in manners and refers to his “tentativeness about words” just like their father. Both the sisters reflected each other and contested with each other and shared Coop was their idol. The following narrative earmarks it:

   Claire disappeared on her horse and Anna into her book. Anna was fourteen and Coop was eighteen. Everything is biographical, Lucien Freud says. What we make, why is it made how we draw a dog, who is it we are
drawn to why we cannot forget. Everything is a collage, even genetics. There is the hidden presence of others in us, even those we have known briefly. We contain them for the rest of our lives, at every border we cross. (16)

The love relationships between Anna and Coop can be viewed through the multiculturalism. Coop is a hired hand who developed love relationship with Anna. Anna’s father caught them red handed. She develops her love for Coop. She reads the stories of musketeer in Duma for Coop. The novelist described their love as:

“Thunder exploded over the deck while they were lying there, holding on to each other, as if it had come down a funnel onto their nakedness. (30)

Anna’s father becomes angry and beats Coop violently. Father attacks on Coop’s face and body. Claire is unknown about this violent attack. Her father puts Anna in the truck and drives off. Claire is aware that lost things are as uncertain as prayer. Claire is exposed to emotional trauma. She is unknown about Anna and their father. Coop leaves the cabin. The incestuous relationship between Anna and Coop is projected many times. The incestuous relationship between Roman and Marie-Neige is also portrayed in the novel. Both are disguised as brother and sister make love in the moonlight. The author describes the love relationships:

Sometimes she brought a library book and sat reading in the shadow of the corrugated roof’s overhang until the sound of his sawing and hammering disappeared and she was in another country, in Italy with Leopard or in France with Musketeer. They were days they barely touched. (28)

Anna migrates to France from her American cultural roots. She travels to San Francisco and towards south of France where she befriends Branka who takes her to the farm house of a famous French writer Lucien Segura. The father remains a man of few words for the rest of his life. Coop also displaced and decided never to come back. After displacement from the farm he becomes a professional gambler.

Anna starts a new life after immigration and carries along with her past reminiscences in all her activities consciously or unconsciously. Anna meets Branka an architect and both travel to a belfry which was constructed in 13th century. The belfry reflects every part of the landscape and it is constructed with a screw or coil. It represents the culture of
France. In France Anna enjoys her new life. It is a quiet place for Anna. Anna encounters Gypsy robbers and escapes narrowly. Anna describes the place of Demu where the river and the road meet:

River meets a road and covers it forms a perspective where the road has come upon the river and sunk below its surface and it form a life lived to a life imagine. We have been following the river, so that now we must look on the road as stranger. (167)

Anna came in contact with Rafael, a son of thief. He immediately started talking with him like an old friend. It suggests that he involved immediately with the culture of France. Ondaatje describes his closeness as:

Anna was talking with him as if he were an old friend from childhood who had changed shape into this thickset man. His musical fingers were now dicing tomatoes. (72)

Rafael was a singer and he was interested in music. He sings with his guitar everywhere in France. The culture of singer is reflected through Rafael. Ondaatje writes:

In the past Rafael had travelled from village to village, argued a salary, invented melodies, stolen cords, slashed the legs off an old song to use just the torso—but he had come to love now most of all the playing music with no one there. (79)

Anna began writing the life history of Lucien Segura with a pseudonym and the name is not disclosed to the reader. It means she has adopted the different name which shows her different identity. Lucien love affair is sad and unfulfilled.

The novelist used marginal characters in his novel. He tries to bring the marginal figures of the society into the mainstream of the society. Anna meets son of thief Astolf. Thief was travelling with his Romani wife Aria and his son Rafael. Aria and Rafael’s mother is having false name and does not wish to have a permanent relationship with him. Raphael, a son of Roma family of the France, is a good soul and Anna loves him because he replaced Coop. He is like a guardian angel for Anna that he has come to cure the wounded heart of Anna. Anna feels that he is an angel and “there appears to be no darkness in him”. He is a singer and a guitarist. Anna meets him in a forest amidst grass
playing his guitar. Anna’s involvement in research makes her to forget her past memories:

This smallest possible space is where Anna wishes to be now. The truth of her life comes out only in places like this….. Anna, who keeps herself at a distance from those who show anger or violence, just as she is still fearful of true intimacy. Her past is hidden from everyone. She has never turned to a lover or friends when they speak about families. (75)

Coop escapes from Anna’s father and begins his life as a professional gambler. He gets involved in the culture of gambler. He makes a circle of friends with other Casanovas. Coop purchased a book of card games and casinos and he becomes an expert gambler. At the age of twenty three he migrates to Nevada and starts a new life as a professional gambler. His childhood experience at Petaluma farm develops his skill as a gambler. He makes close relationship with Dorn, Mancini and the Dauphin. “The Dauphin is the nick name because the person was reading a European novel and a few months later Dauphin dies.

Coop was living in Santa Maria of Los Angeles. Santa Maria was a place of migrants. The people came from different culture and live together in Santa Maria. Ondaatje describes:

A generation back, Santa Barbara Country was populated mostly by migrant labourers, Mexican, Colombian, Vietnamese, Italian-American who worked on the ranches and vegetable farms that spread over the landscape beyond the highway. (111)

Coop falls in love with Bridget. The love relationship with Bridget shows mixture of culture. He comes in contact with various cultures in Santa Barabara Country. It is a country where the people from different country migrated.

Claire migrated to San Francisco and started working with a lawyer Vea. Her migration from one place to another place makes her learn different culture. Claire observes Vea who is sitting with her for dinner. Ondaatje describes

They sat and ate dinner across from each other. She noticed how much older he seemed. She was aware of how his clothes looked loose on him
now, although he still appeared a severe man, precise as a utility in the way he moved and the way he talked at the kitchen table.(99)

Ondaatje described the sisters are like the Japanese screen which looks like shattered glass. Anna constructs her identity from her broken life. Anna feels always the presence of her sister because of her sister’s bondage with her. It is painful to rebuild their lost lives. The love between the sisters which is incomparable but it is not remained till the end of the novel because of some incidents.

Claire did not left the farm and loved ones like her sisters. Her father becomes a sort of solitary. She develops a mediator for a defence lawyer Aldo Vea. She is not stuck up to her new identity but she is so caring her sister. The psychological wound is disturbing and hurting.

The novel is symbolic, there are many symbols used in the novel. Anna buys few Buddhists’ flags. There are flags of every colour fixed in the farm near the cabin occupied by Coop. Yellow is earth, green is water, red is fire and white is cloud and blue is sky which denotes limitless space of the mind. The loss of the white flag after Anna and Coop’s intimacy symbolizes the loss of innocence. Red flag symbolizes the fire from which they must escape. Coop does not want the flags given by Anna to touch the ground. The image of blue table appears thrice in the novel. All these different color flag indicates the different culture. These entire colour flag show the mixture of all culture. River is a symbol that is used throughout the novel; the river is present in the Petaluma farm, near Coop’s gambling restaurant, near that she stays during the week ends with her father. The work was a sort of research and Vea taught her to interact with people. At this juncture she meets Coop accidentally. Once in a restaurant she takes a wrong pill and in a drowsy state collides on Coop coincidentally; she almost embraces him. He takes her to the hotel room and leaves his number with her. It took two days for her to catch hold of him from the number he had left. She arrives at his Tahoe Chalet and there she finds him in an unconscious state.

The writer’s life and experience is reflected through his characters. The concept, ‘the self’ and ‘the other’ is used to explain the issues of a multiracial and multicultural society. The marginalized figures are referred to as ‘other’.
4.3 MULTICULTURALISM IN *THE CAT’S TABLE*

4.3.1 Introduction:

Michael Ondaatje’s sixth novel *The Cat’s Table* was published in the year 2011. The novel depicts the history of marginal figures. These marginal figures travel from Sri Lanka to England. The travellers belong to different cultures and their culture is mixed with the culture of others. The novel depicts the story of migrants. Michael, the protagonist of the novel, is travelling from Colombo to England on a ship Oronsay. There are many people from different communities travelling to England. People from the marginal sections of the society are voyaging to England. Hence, the get together of these people on the boat mixes up their culture of one community with that of another community. They live in a multicultural world. The novel depicts cultural clashes among these characters.

Michael is assigned two other characters Ramadhin and Cassius. Both belong to marginal sections of the society. Michael and his friends are assigned Table no 76 which is the least privileged place on the ship Oronsay.

Michael travels along with his two friends. One of the ladies always gives suggestion to him on the ship Oronsay. She always insults him. Once she tells Michael to wear dress appropriately before entering into the First Class Lounge in order to visit Flavia Prins. People of the third world countries are always insulted in the first world countries.

Michael meets a man from west, Mr. Hastie. He is an in-charge of the kennels on the Oronsay. He adopts the habit of wearing sarong. There is less conversation between Michael and Hastie.

The novelist portrays cultural clashes in this novel. The novel depicts the journey of Michael from Colombo to England to meet his mother. Michael encounters different cultural people in his journey. It is a Michael’s journey from childhood to adulthood. The ship travels from east to west via Suez Canal. They meet people of different cultures in their journey. At last, the ship reaches to the shore of England. All the people on the ship get scattered everywhere. All the incidents happened on the ship Oronsay are carried by the characters with them.
The novelist portrays various aspects of multiculturalism in this novel. They are marginalization, cultural clashes, multicultural relationships, violence, suffering and humiliation. These aspects are discussed very briefly.

4.3.2 Theme of Marginalization:

Michael Ondaatje’s most recent novel *The Cat’s Table* is published in November 2011. The novel *The Cat’s Table* portrayed minority and marginal community. Ondaatje lays out the characters like cards on a table and shuffles them. It gives the passengers a sense of invisibility and the freedom to behave as they wish. In the novel *The Cat’s Table* the writer takes the reader on a journey through his three deeply submerged weeks in his memories of travelling in an ocean liner Oronsay from Colombo to England. At the age of 11, he began his journey in 1954, where his past is being transformed into his future self.

Michael was travelling to the country of England whose culture is quite different from the culture of Sri Lanka. The ship was carrying more than six hundred people to England. The people on the ship came from different cultural background. Ondaatje describes:

I was not forewarned that the ship would have seven levels, hold more than six hundred people including a captain, nine cooks, engineers, a veterinarian, and that it would contain a small jail and chlorinated pools that would actually sail with us over two oceans. (8-9)

Michael was assigned Table 76 on the ship Oronsay. Nine people are assigned Table 76 and the two boys’ age is similar to Michael. It indicates that they are treated marginal figures here. In this regard Ondaatje further writes:

We seem to be at the Cat’s table’, the woman called Miss. Lasqueti said. We are in the least privileged place. It was clear we were located far from the Captain’s table which was opposite end of the dining room.(10)

The place given to them is very least privileged and they are seating away from the Captains table. Captain is treated as a superior and other people are treated as inferior. The novelist portrays all the marginal figures of the society such as botanist, tailor, pianist, shipdismantler, Hyderabad mind Sunil and Baron. Ondaatje portrayed few female characters in this novel namely Miss Lasquetti and her daughter Asuntha. The number of women compared to men on the ship Oronsay is less.
4.3.3 Theme of Cultural Clashes:
The novel depicts the elements of cultural clashes. The people around Michael belong to different cultures. They are botanist, tailor, pianist and ship dismantler. Michael had no brothers and sisters. He has closest relatives. Emily de Saram, who was travelling on the same boat, was distant cousin of Michael. Ondaatje describes the multicultural world on the ship Oronsay:

On the ship Oronsay, however, there was the chance to escape all order. And I reinvented myself in this seemingly, imaginary world, with its ship dismantlers and tailors and adult passengers who during the evening celebrations, staggered around in giant animal heads, some of the women dancing with skirts barely rare, as the ship’s orchestra.( 17)

On the ship Oronsay, he developed his friendship with two young boys of his age. Ramadhin was a quiet man and Cassius was an exuberant man. It is the journey of Michael from the East to the west. He boards on a sea voyage by the War ship ‘Oronsay’ from Colombo to England, via Suez Canal. The novel also depicts Michael’s journey from East to West to meet his mother in England. When he reached to England, he never feels to be at home. This immigrant story is set on the board of vessel in the early 1950s. Pabitra Bharali writes in her article “Diasporic Rebirth: Hybridity, Transnationality and Multiculturalism’ about the immigration as follows:

The sea voyage from Sri Lanka to England turns out to be the third space of identity formation which also comes as a sort of paradise for the protagonist Michael and his friends Ramadhin and Cassius. Construction of transcultural identity in the face of ever fluid nature of postmodern identity has been addressed in the growth of the protagonist. The transactions among the passengers diversified by class, gender, profession and politico-legal relationships (e.g. of the night walking prisoner) points to the dynamics of negotiation of identity. (Bharali,198)

The novel depicts the voyage of Mynah and his encounter with the fascinating series of the adult characters and the two boys of his age named Ramadhin and Cassius. All these characters tell about their life and express the trauma of cultural clashes they have encountered in their life. The protagonist Michael, an eleven-year-old boy, is the narrator
of the story of his migration and his ship voyage. He also like the narrator embarks for the first time on a voyage. The narrator says:

He was eleven-years old that night when, green as he could be about the world, he climbed abroad the first and only ship of his life.(4)

Before he boards on a voyage, he is a Ceylonese boy who never has slept under a blanket and he has not made any longest journey in his life. These two places Nuwara Eliya and Horton Plains are central provinces in Sri Lanka. This time he is travelling to England with number of other travellers. His act of mixing up with all these travellers shows his transcultural or multicultural root. This journey of Michael connects past, present and future. He always thinks of future. He is travelling first time to Great Britain after his parents’ divorce. Ondaatje writes:

As I got into the car, it was explained to me that after I’d crossed the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea, and gone through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean, I would arrive one morning on a small pier in England and my mother would meet me there. It was not the magic or the scale of the journey that was of concern to me, but that detail of how my mother could know when exactly I would arrive in that other country. And if she would be there. (7).

He farewells Narayan and Gunepal who are his cooks. All the characters on the ship Oronsay are from different cultural background. He mixed up with these people and developed his multicultural root.

Quill and quire review comments on multicultural world on the Oronsay ‘Oronsay in The Cat’s Table:

The boy is nicknamed Mynah by his shipmates, he has absent parents and thus “no secure map”, and is free to invent himself. For Mynah the sea voyage marks a kind of second birth, a passage that influences everything significant in his later life. Interwoven with the drama of Mynah’s journey are his experiences and reflections and adult, where many of childhood mysteries experienced abroad are unravelled with the benefit of hindsight.

(www.quillandquire.com/review)
Michael met many people on his sea voyage and he has a significant effect on his life. Ramadhin who is a friend of Michael calls him as ‘Mynah.’ In England ‘he is known only by his surname’, but someone says on phone call ‘Mynah’, it may be either Ramadhin or Cassius. He says:

My shipboard nickname was ‘Mynah.’…… At that time, I suppose, I was the Mynah of the group, repeating whatever I overheard to the other two. Ramadhin gave it to me accidently, and Cassius, recognizing its easy outgrowth from my name, started calling me that. (202)

Michael Ondaatje argues in an interview with Mr. Steve Roberts about the naming. He says it is a cultural phenomenon and it indicates cultural identity:

Well it looks like a Dutch name, but I think my family originally came from India to Sri Lanka or Ceylon as it was called then. And when the Dutch invaded, the very good smart businessman made their names look like they were Dutch names so that the double A and the TJ and so forth. So it probably, you know, phonetically a very easy to spell name, but now it is more complicated and classy as they would say.

(http://thedianerehmshow.org/shows/2011-12-08)

His migration to England and Canada makes him a kind of cultural mongrel. It is not only racial but also lingual. Cassius is one of the friends of Mynah on the cat’s table. Sri Lankan parents have changed their direction from giving a (firstborn) such a name:

Though Sri Lanka has always enjoined the merging of classical first names with Sinhalese last names-Solomon and Senaka are not common, but they exist. (51)

Cassius’ reputation in St. Thomas College in Sri Lanka is not good. But he wants to represent his school’s name abroad. His name is very much tender. Ondaatje observes Cassius as:

A few years after he had become well known, his school in England, which he had hated and which had probably disliked him, asked him to donate a painting. (200)
When a show of Cassius’s paintings is arranged in England Mynah wishes to meet Cassius. Mynah visits the gallery but he can’t meet Cassius. Michael observes the paintings of Cassius which remembers him their voyage on the ‘Oronsay’:

For what I saw in the paintings was Cassius himself. They were large canvasses that felt the three rooms of the Waddington Gallery. About fifteen of them. They were all about that night in El Suweis. The very same sulphur lights above the night activity that I still remember…I even found Ramadhin’s small dog gazing at the boat. All this enlarged me, and I did not know why. (180-181)

The paintings of Cassius take Michael into the past remembrances. These paintings show ‘Oronsay’s entrance into another culture or the mix of other culture. The paintings of Cassius show his emotions and indicates goodbye to all the Asian culture and the Asian continent. He left the culture and continent of Asia. He is now mixed with culture of the west. Here the writer shows the clashes of eastern and western culture.

Their ship arrived at Aden. All are in a hurry for letter writing. It was a tradition that if the mail stamped in Aden, it will be sent back to Australia and Ceylon or onward to England. Ondaatje describes about the harbour Aden:

Aden had been a great harbor as early as the seventh century B.C. and was mentioned in the Old Testament. It was where Cain and Abel were buried, Mr. Fonseka said, preparing us for the city himself had never seen. It had cisterns built out of Volcanic rock, a falcon market, an oasis quarter, an aquarium, a section of town given over to sail makers and stores that contained merchandise from every corner of the globe. (139)

Mynah, Ramadhin and Cassius have felt alienated with the culture of Aden. They were surrounded by the new language. They could not understand the language. They have to communicate with a gesture to the salesmen and they laugh when he laughs and nods when he nods.

Their language is the great barrier in alien land. They use only non-verbal communication such as gesture, posture, waving the hands, nodding, laughing when others laugh and nodding when others nod. Mynah thinks that the world of Colombo is
like the world of Aden. The world of Aden and Colombo is quite different. He shows the bad picture of the Aden. He writes:

Here was a sterner world, with fewer luxuries. There was no overripe fruit in the gutters. There were in facto no gutters. It was dusty landscape, as if water had not been invented. The only liquid was the cup of dark tea offered to us by the carpet Salesman, along with a delicious, permanently remembered almond sweet.(142)

Both Mynah and Emily are close relatives and they have same childhood experiences. The family of Emily is always under the threat of her father’s rage. Her grandmother keeps in boarding school of Southern India to keep her away from her father. She was seventeen years old when she arrived in England to complete her last two years of schooling. But in foreign culture she is living on one of the Gulf Islands on the West coast of Canada as a kind of expatriate. Her marriage is failure and she has stepped out of marriage. She talks about her marriage:

She said the marriage had been a cautious one, and she had stepped out of it, recognizing it was too cold a building to live in for the rest of her life.

(341)

She cannot adjust with the culture of her husband Desmond. So she left him and came to England. After her expulsion from the college, she takes interest in a person belonging to other culture. Here the two cultures are brought together. But their traditional culture rejects to accept new culture in the form of husband. She moves to England to become a boarder at Cheltenham Ladies College. She is still the part of the Sri Lankan community in London and some boyfriends wandering beside her.

Emily expresses her trauma of cultural clashes and its impact on entire life. She has come in contact with different cultures. She also feels rootless due to cultural clash. She says:

I was supposed to fly back for his funeral….. In the end, she realizes, ‘we don’t belong anywhere.’ She always feels alienated in both the cultures. Here Ondaatje wishes to express the ‘in-between’ situation of an immigrants: She had believed, every foothold for years, had been lie. ‘I
have thought all along I was the one who killed him,’ she said quietly. ‘May be I did.’ (351)

Miss Lasquetti is also from multicultural root. Her first name is ‘Perinita’ which suggests her European background. She is fond of the Italian language. She says:

I went to Italy in my twenties, for the language. I was fluid with languages and I loved Italian best. Someone suggested I apply to the Villa Ortensia a job. A wealthy American couple Horace and Rose Johnson, had bought it and were turning it into a great archive of art. (298)

Michael’s marriage with Massi in teen age plays very important role in attaching himself with native culture. Massi is adjusted quickly in foreign culture in comparison with Ramadhin. After many days, Michael looks Massi at Mill Hill house in London and she moves from one place to another place in this expatriate community. He marries Massi in order to remain attached with his own childhood native community.

Hastie is from England and he served in eastern country. Now he is returning to his own country. He faces the problem of cultural clashes in eastern country. He says:

At some stage during his travels in the East, he had picked up the habit of wearing a Sarong, and most of the time he wore just that around his waist, even when his friends came by. (27)

4.3.4 Theme of Multicultural Relationships:

Ondaatje portrays multicultural relationships in this novel. Max Mazeppa, Master of the Piano, was one of the companions on the Oronsay. He is having multicultural roots. He was half Sicilian and half other. It shows his hybrid cultural identity. The writer describes him as:

He was half Sicilian, half something else, he told us in his un-track-downable accent. He had worked in Europe, travelled briefly into the Americas, and gone beyond them until he found himself in the tropics, living above a harbor bar. (39)

He performs in an Orchestra. Once there was a printing error about his name on the poster of advertisement after his performance in France. His stage name or War name is Sunny Meadows. He was also called Sunny Meadows on Oronsay but on the Cats table, he is Mazeppa. He is recongnized with different names which indicate his hybrid identity.
The narrator explores multicultural roots in Ramadhin’s life, and his relationship with his student Heather Cave. Ramadhin lives in the host culture and also lives in the new culture of England. Ondaatje observes that every immigrant family does not belong to any new country where they settle.

He is very happy in Colombo. But he is not cheerful in his host land because his memory and present culture always haunt him. He is living in an unfamiliar and alien culture. He is weak by his heart, so it creates guilty feeling in him. Massi told the writer about Ramadhin’s death as:

He had been found with his heart stopped, a knife beside him. That was all. He had gone into the darkness of one of the communal garden in the city, near the girl’s flat. Massi told me he was supposedly obsessed with her, someone he had been tutoring. (191-192)

Ramadhin is an innocent man of thirty years. He died because of his love for the girl Heather Cave. Ramadhin in this immigrant’s community lives as a cocoon. He is not active and man of knowledge likes others. Heather Cave thinks that Ramadhin should visit the boy Rajiv, who is also from Asia and bring him back to her. Ramadhin’s heart is trembling he cannot speak and he cannot waive the great weight against his heart and this leads him to his death. So he is the victim of cultural clash and cannot survive in his native land. They form the community on the’ Oronsay’ on the ship. Some of the members among their group are from the different cultural background, other than Sri Lankan culture.

The roommate of Mynah Mr. Hastie is in charge of the kennel on the ‘Oronsay’ on the ship. He is more extrovert outside his cabin. The writer describes him about the eastern culture of Mr. Hastie. He is wearing Sarong which shows the culture of Sri Lanka. Ondaatje describes:

At some stage during his travels in the East, he had picked up the habit of wearing the sarong, and most of the time he wore just that around his waist, even when his friends came by. (27)

Michael wears sarong when he goes to East. The sarong indicates his love for Sri Lankan culture. The reading of Holy Book ‘The Bhagwad Gita’ shows his love for Eastern culture.
4.3.5 Theme of Violence, Suffering and Humiliation:

Violence, suffering and humiliation is also portrayed in this novel. Most of the characters have suffered a lot. Sir Hector de Silva, a philanthropist on the ‘Oronsay’ is the victim of the curse by a holy priest or ‘battaramulle’. His journey towards Europe in search of a doctor who can cure him: Sir Hector had been knighthood in England for his donations to various charities. So now he was cocooned in a grand double suit on the ‘Oronsay’, suffering from hydrophobia.

The English specialist rejects to come to Colombo to deal with Sir Hector’s medical problem in spite of the recommendation from the British governor. In Colombo, he is under the spell of ‘battaramulle.’ Sir Hector once said after seeing the priest or monk, muttaraballa. It means urinating dog. Because of the insult the monk cursed him by saying, ‘I’ll send you a ‘muttaraballa...’ and sealed the fate of Sir Hector d Silva by chanting mantras. After this incident Sir Hector’s pet terrier bites his hand, and ‘dog died, showing the symptoms of rabies.’ And ‘urinating dog’ has left his message for Sir Hector:

As the patient was being given supportive care, the duration of the illness might last as long as twenty-five days before it was fatal...And three staterooms were booked on the ‘Oronsay’, which was the next ship leaving for Europe, just in case. The liner would stop at Aden, Port Said and Gibraltar, and it was hopped a specialist would be able to meet with the vessel in at least one of these locations. (90)

The ayurvedic doctors from the Sri Lanka have claimed that they have successfully treated victims of rabies. All the doctors said to him that if he remains on the island, he will be close to the country’s most powerful herbal remedies’. He prefers to go Europe for his treatment instead of taking treatment in Sri Lanka. He believes in Europe because of its advanced treatment than the powerful herbal remedies of the island. Ondaatje Observes:

In the end, Sir Hector decided to take the ship to England. Acquiring wealth he had also acquired complete faith in the advancements of Europe. Perhaps this would prove to be his fatal flaw. (91)
In Russian novel, Sir Hector read about the people for curing their illness in Colombo depend on magic, astrology, and botanical charts which is in spidery handwriting. He has grown in Sri Lankan culture and he knows how to cure to alleviate a pain. He is travelling with attendants, which includes doctors, ayurvedic doctor, a lawyer, his wife and daughter.

Mynah and his friends are fascinated by the determination of the Australian girl who is skating on the perimeter of the upper deck on Oronsay. Michael boards on a voyage and his journey is an adventurous one. He said that he has missed many Sri Lankan things like insects, garden birds and gecko talk. It means, he left his home culture and now came to another culture. He also remembers his days in Boralesgamuwa. Ondaatje writes.

Some mornings in Boralesgamuwa, I used to wake early and make my way though the dark, spacious bungalow until I came to Narayan’s door. It was not yet six o’clock. I waited until he came out, tugging his sarong tighter. (72-73)

He remembers his days with Narayan, his cook and childhood companion. Both walk together and bring egg hoppers from Jinadasa and ate it. They drink tea and there are many cups at their fee. He always enjoyed with Narayan. Both Narayan and Gunepal are his best companions and guides. Ondaatje describes it as:

Narayan and Gunepal were my essential and affectionate guides during that unformed stage of my life, and in some way they made me question the world I supposedly belonged to. They opened doors for me into another world. (75)

Michael laments over their loss when he left Sri Lanka when he was eleven years old. The tears flow in his eyes for losing the company of his friends: He also saw the face of them when he reads the book of Indian writer R.K.Narayan.

The person who migrates carries things which are dear to them. Mr. Fonseka is a Colombo man who carries Sri Lankan things Kothamalli, Balsam and Sri Lankan manner and accent and wide ranging knowledge of different books. He takes tension of living in the foreign culture.

The novel depicts the true picture of different cultures and all the characters in the novel come in contact with various cultures. The protagonist who is eleven years old comes
across various cultures. During his journey towards England on the ‘Oronsay’ Mynah encounters many adult characters and their life stories which bring changes in his life. He adopts foreign culture for living in England.