CONCLUSION

Relativism as a metaphysical position has been at the same time influential and controversial. As a philosophical trend it had originated in the Sophist tradition of ancient Greece, and it continues with ups and downs to mould the postulates and positions not only in philosophy and social sciences but even in physical sciences. In this work, the power of relativism as a metaphysical stance has been assessed in terms of its much debated polarity with absolutism. In Chapter 1 we have observed that this tendency to view relativism and absolutism as logical opposites has been instigated by the traditional way of conceiving reality and the modernist conception of it in terms of binary opposites. There is actually no irreconcilable contradiction between them. This has been demonstrated in the first chapter by analyzing different interpretations pertaining to these two positions, both in Indian and in western philosophy. Thus it has been concluded that in spite of the recognition of the Absolute as the one and only one reality, neither Sankara nor Hegel had denied the truth of the manifest plurality, and this implies their logical obligation to explain the relationship between the one and many. In the attempt to resolve the absolutism vs. relativism dispute, we have taken the position that absolutely absolutistic or absolutely relativistic views are not tenable in any theoretical enterprise.
We have summarized the advantages and benefits of relativist position in Cultural Studies in Chapter 2. CR, if not viewed in an absolutistic sense, implies the following ethical values:

i) tolerance

ii) open-mindedness and

iii) reciprocal recognition of cultures.

By accepting these values we shall be able to cultivate respect for the

a) co-existence of cultures

b) uniqueness and identity of every culture and

c) the inherent worth of every culture and its right to self-evaluation.

All these ethical postulates of CR show that relativism in no way implies the stagnation of cultures. We are tempted to interpret CR as the mother of anarchism only when we take relativism from an absolutistic standpoint. Once we are free from that prejudice, CR becomes a strong foundation for accepting the role and scope of mrms in the present day world.

In spite of the diversity in the manifest forms of social institutions, there is the urge for socialization which is a species trait. Similarly, beyond the diversity of cultures, the basic tendency to create and maintain culture is an inherent biological trait of humans. Human groups develop cultures out
of the irresistible urge to create efficient mechanisms to aid subsistence and survival. The expressions of morality, culture and aesthetic sense are all diverse in different cases, but they all come out of a corresponding instinctive /biological urge. The above observation has enabled us to clarify that CR does not imply an absolute denial of any universal standards of cultural and moral values and hence it does not purport to an absolutely let loose situation in cultural affairs.

While establishing the abovementioned position it is necessary to clarify the sense in which we ascribe universality to cultural /moral values. In our discussion on CR in the second chapter, it has been made clear that universality in this context is to be understood as species universality that occurs due to the function of the inherent biological trait for conceiving and constructing cultural entities as also for judging what is morally right or wrong.

It has been concluded that the biological urge for creating culture and for acculturation has its operational locus varying from place to place as the process is necessarily determined by trans-individual factors like the ecological and material conditions of life. Hence, the universal element in culture formation in no way contradicts its manifold expressions. This has led us to the conclusion that the dialectical correlation between the universal and relative in culture is a perfectly plausible ground for accepting CR with
its core postulate - the very existence of a culture contains the reasoned defence for its empirical subsistence and ethical autonomy.

We have noted the necessary correlation between culture and ethics in terms of similarity as well as inclusion. This has enabled us to conclude that both culture and morality have a constant formative element in the biological urge for socialization that is indeed a higher level expression of the basic herd instinct. In spite of this universal element in terms of their origin both cultural as well as ethical expressions, as reflecting in the scheme of rules and norms of social behaviour, are different in different communities in different times and places. This determines the apparent variety of cultures that defines the functional locus of CR. This observation has been further corroborated with the findings in neurobiology/neuro-ethics which provide a promising ground for postulating the specific neural substrates of culture formation and moral behaviour.

In the study of the concepts and cases in different contexts of this work a concerted use of analytic, critical, synthetic and hypothetico-deductive methods was made. They were all intended to converge in the philosophical analysis of CR for delineating its metaphysical and ethical dimensions. The metaphysics of CR has been analyzed with reference to the question - What a culture aims at or what is the purpose of ‘creating a culture’. This adds a philosophical dimension to Cultural Studies by going
beyond its limited focus on the question of the origin and development of cultures. We have noted that a culture does not exist for itself which means that culture is not for culture’s sake. This makes it mandatory to discover the transcendental goals of culture. Our conclusion in this regard is based on the premise that the primary focus or preference of human life is survival, self-preservation and moreover species preservation. Culture is a device to serve this purpose.

The culture of a particular community is necessarily moulded and developed in a particular geographic and ecological setting. Thus the means of livelihood, food habits and all other elements of culture are moulded in relation to a given ecosystem. Deterioration of ecosystem leads to that of culture and vice versa. Hence culture is in fact a mechanism that aids or supports the existence/survival of a community in relation to a given natural environment. This explains why traditional communities insist on the conservation of culture, consciously or unconsciously, as the means to the conservation of the ecosystem to which their traditional vocations are necessarily tied. On the basis of the preceding study, we can conclude that the formation and development of a culture necessarily aims at ensuring the basic existence of a community within a given natural environment. This nexus of culture-ecosystem-livelihood proves the ethical significance of CR as the ideological device to counter and resist the invasive projects of
imperialist forces that evermore serves the economic interests of a
dominator group.

The unique identity of a culture inherent in its very formation is the
legitimate ground for its existential identity and functional autonomy. This
implies that every culture is a stand-alone unit of human social life. CR is,
beyond doubt, the ethical position that recognizes this identity and
autonomy of cultures, and it is already established that the rise of mrms
obviously indicates the covert or overt attempt of a master culture to
dominate and displace a traditional indigenous cultural group by
proselytizing the latter with a master narrative like racial glory or
technological progress.

The second dimension of CR that determines its philosophical
dimension is its ethical potential that becomes meaningful and significant in
the context of the human urge and right to resist oppression. The ethical
potential of CR in relation to mrms has been substantiated with reference to
the axiomatic premise of CR which means that every culture is self-
contained, self-regulating and autonomous. Accordingly, every culture has
the legitimate right to decide its values and practices. Comparison of
concepts, customs, beliefs and values is a matter of self-option. It is widely
acknowledged that to change is human, and no human creation including
culture is immune to changes. In this work, we have tried to answer the
crucial question whether CR implies the stagnation of cultures? The conclusion is that CR does not imply a categorical rejection of change in cultural entities including the ethical provided that the change is according to intracultural concern and consent rather than intercultural evaluation.

We have carried out this study with the primary objective of exploring how and how far the philosophical potentials of CR provide an ethical ground/platform for the various types of mrms emerging in different parts of the world. There are numerous such movements all over the world engaged in resisting racial, gender-based and environmental assaults and invasions. The underlying motive of this work has been to analyze the ways in which CR is associated with the emergence and functioning of mrms. It was concluded in this regard that resistance motive as an instinctive urge is manifest both on human and non-human levels. Yet, in Homo sapiens, there is a visible transition of this motive from the individual to collective level at which resistance becomes organized and teleological. From this study, it has been inferred that the causal complex behind resistance efforts/movements is multi-dimensional comprising of biological, psychological and cultural components.

We have analyzed in Chapter 3 the interconnected dimensions of oppression as also of its antithesis namely resistance. For this, we have taken colonialism as a paradigm of oppression with special reference to
British colonialism in India. From the analysis, we have concluded that colonialism had succeeded much by inferiorizing the colonized people in terms of primitive/civilized dualism in order to justify the oppression. This schism had been the ideological weapon of the colonialist oppressors. We have also noticed that colonial oppression continues even today in the form of neocolonial imperialism that exercises cultural hegemony without showing its direct political presence.

In continuation with these observations, we have tried to bring out in Chapter 4 the nature and scope of resistance movements at micro levels of culture. Attempt has been made to assimilate the findings in the subaltern studies in the Indian context into our analysis of the correlation between Mrms and mrms. It had been thus concluded that in the nationalist interpretation of Indian freedom movement as the glorious achievement of the national elite the participation and contribution of mrms representing peasant, tribal and Dalit issues were selfishly ignored. We have accepted the role of subaltern groups in building up resistance against the native oppressors as also against the foreign imperialist forces. Hence it is clear that behind every Mrm normally there will be the amalgamation of mrms. In the present day world, mrms are emerging and acquiring strength in an unprecedented manner even without fostering the formation of a Mrm.
We have concluded that most of the mrms are motivated directly or indirectly by ecological concerns which further determine cultural concerns that ultimately converge into the basic urge to protect one’s means of subsistence and survival. The dynamics of mrms, therefore, is determined by the issues of development vs. displacement, profit motive vs. subsistence motive and the like. The mrms represent mainly two types of protesting groups - ecological ethnicities like tribal communities or rural cultivators who hold on to their traditional farming and the multiethnic communities that occupy semiurban or suburban areas.

In the case of ecological communities, ecosystem, culture and livelihood are inseparable, and displacement leads eventually to the extinction of such ethnicities. The mega projects implemented in their traditional land destroy their abode of existence that has been maintained through generations. In the case of multiethnic communities, the areas surrounding cities and towns are being earmarked for dumping urban waste. In such areas, ecosystem is already devastated and now the human population has to suffer the health hazards that make migration inevitable. Plans to develop tourism, transportation and housing also affect human life in the form of displacement pressure. This plight of marginalized groups has been made clear by analyzing relevant instances and personal interviews with experts and some affected people.
One tragic impact of this kind of displacement pressure on isolated indigenous groups and marginalized suburban people is their desperate plight to flee into the traps of urban culture. Urbanization and industrialization leave them homeless and detached from traditional vocations. In the desperate effort to survive, they migrate into the strange urban world to take up menial jobs in urban households or industrial units. Hence the displacement pressure from invaders ultimately deprives marginalized groups of their cultural identity and the natural right to hold their ancestral land and its riches for their own welfare. This, as we have observed in the case studies in Chapter 4, is a major cause of the emergence of mrms in the present day world. The more are the cases of domination and invasion the more are the instances of mrms.

What makes a culture an integral system is the set of moral codes and belief systems which are different in different cultures. Relativists emphasize this plurality of cultures and the independent validity of moral codes within a culture. That means the task of relativists is not to analyze and ascertain the right/wrong moral codes, but to reject the absolutist tendency to judge the components of one culture with reference to certain alien standards which are projected as universal but are actually the constructs of a dominant group. The attitude of relativists originated mainly as a reaction to the absolutist position. It grew out of a kind of intolerance towards absolutism. At the same time relativism becomes an ethical attitude
of tolerance also. Hence CR implies an interesting reconciliation of tolerance (towards cultural identity) and intolerance (towards absolutism).

If we accept the premise of the co-existence of cultures as a matter of fact, then it becomes obligatory to accept the necessary inference that every culture has the legitimate right to subsistence and survival in its natural and traditional conditions. As a corollary of this, it becomes clear that each culture has the natural and moral right to exist and protect its values and practices. This has been substantiated with an analysis of cultural monism that implies the recognition of some specific cultural entity as right/good and its corollary namely ethnocentrism. These antitheses of CR are in fact the continuation of the western epistemic project based on the two-valued logic founded by Aristotle. This binary fission continued into the intellectual projects of the West to determine in due course the tendency to distinguish between higher culture and lower culture. CR is, on the contrary, the view that a culture just is, but is neither good nor bad, neither primitive nor advanced. This position we have substantiated further in the light of the postmodern emphasis on relativistic perspectives.

We can say that, to a certain extent, cultural anthropology usurps the role of philosophy in Cultural Studies. This may be viewed positively if philosophers keenly receive and work on the data consolidated by cultural anthropologists with the intention to make an ethical judgment on the issue
of comparing cultures. Instead of evaluating different cultures, first of all we have to evaluate the nature and scope of Cultural Studies. Evaluation or critique of a culture at any given point will be problematic because culture is an ever-changing dynamic process. It cannot be frozen for a context of analysis or judgment. So, what ought to be a cultural value is not relevant from an ethical point of view. Instead, philosophical analysis should be concerned with the very attitude or approach to each culture as an ethical issue. To be precise, it is important for philosophy to evaluate the different perspectives of culture instead of evaluating a certain culture as good/bad or superior/inferior.

In Cultural Studies the role of philosophy is mainly to prescribe the right/wrong in laying down the common standards for comparative cultural studies. In this work, we have tried to highlight this potential of philosophical analysis in Cultural Studies to decide the right/wrong in the very evaluation of cultures itself. The question is whether one individual/group can legitimately decide upon the merit/demerit of another one’s value/belief/custom according to the former’s own standards. Our answer is in the negative.

Ethnocentrism with its more intense form in cultural imperialism projects the belief that certain norms, models and ideals in the supposed to be high-culture are universally valid/right. But this claim has been
invalidated since the advent of the postmodern critiques in Cultural Studies, which have been instrumental in exposing the underlying power dichotomies in the domains of culture. We have identified the problem that the faith in the universality of cultural entities of a certain social unit/community is mostly due to the prompted acceptance of its standards without any actual element of universality in them. Any such imposition of a dominating culture is always preceded by the inferiorization of the dominated culture/s. The prompting of ‘higher values’ implies the displacement of ‘lower values’, and the hierarchy is deliberately designed and constructed with definite oppressive and exploitative inclination. This is the empirical context in which CR provides the ethical rationale for maintaining the cultural identity of marginalized communities and groups the world over.

The analysis of the ideological basis of mrms in Chapter 5 has led us to the conclusion that more than the intention to ensure survival and subsistence there is no specific ‘ism’ that provides a common motivational ground for mrms. We have further considered the problems of conceiving the origin and role of mrms in the light of the Marxian perspective of oppression vs. resistance instances. It is clear that in the context of mrms the elements like antagonistic classes, conflicting interests and dominator-dominated schism do not match the Marxian scheme. Hence the question whether there is an ideology of mrms cannot be approached in the
conventional way because the participants in the mrms are not directly concerned with ideologies or isms. Their only cry is to ‘let them live’ in their own traditional and natural habitats. In spite of the absence of any direct commitment to hegemonic ideologies, mrms emerge and operate in the conflicting context of the ideology of survival vs. the ideology of invasion. Its further dimensions are visible in the tension between localism/globalism and need/greed. We have taken many instances of mrms, and all these show that the emergence of mrms is only the spontaneous reaction of the affected people in a particular local region against the economic, ecological and cultural invasion of some interest group from outside. From this analysis, we have concluded that each mrm has its own cultural background and ideology even though it is susceptible to various interpretations. Anyway, it is not possible to draw a macro ideological circle like Gandhism or Marxism around the miniature ideology of a small group that strives for ensuring its subsistence and survival.

Nowhere in the preceding sections we have straightway taken up the question of extremism and terrorism in the context of CR. But it was shown that relativism is in no way the mother of anarchism. Resistance is a natural tendency of humans that prompts them to handle and overcome situations of unbearable oppression and invasion. CR not only recognizes the cultural identity and ethical autonomy of every distinct unit but also implies the obligation to give due respect for the identity and autonomy of every other
unit. In the case of extremism and terrorism, especially in the name of religious identity, the ethical values of CR like tolerance and open-mindedness are not at all accepted. Instead, terrorist organizations which fight under the banner of a particular religion in fact intend to impose some particular ideology and culture over other religious sects. This is nothing but a clear instance of ethnocentrism which motivates intolerance towards ‘other’ groups. This is in no way compatible with the basic characteristic of CR. So CR is not an ideological platform for justifying ‘religious’ terrorism which is committed to blatant cultural invasion. Terrorist resistance of this type is meant for the imposition of theocentric interests by coercing, oppressing or annihilating rival groups, and it does not involve the question of ensuring the conditions of survival and subsistence. That is why genocide becomes a prominent item in terrorist agenda based on the abstract notion of ‘false consciousness and pride’ rather than the concrete problems of existence.

The aforementioned conclusions derived from this study of the correlation between CR and mrms lead us to the assertion that if you want your culture with its autonomy to be respected then it is your moral obligation to respect the autonomy of every other culture. This ethical dimension of CR is indeed the philosophical ground for understanding and explaining the political space being created and occupied by the mrms that
fight resolutely but often hopelessly to ensure the conservation of some natural habitat and culture.

In spite of the differences in the motivational causes and purpose behind mrm, the functional space occupied by them has been linked with one or another ecological issue. Hence we have maintained an eco-ethical focus in the studies on mrm. Yet, different movements emerging in different contexts of oppression and invasion will have certain motivating factors other than the ecological. So there is further scope for carrying out a detailed study of the nature, characteristics and aims of the mrm emerging on the basis of gender, race and caste issues. In this regard, there is also ample scope for an elaborate study of identity politics that is being moulded by mrm. Another area for prospective study is the role of the state and its organs in handling the issues behind the emergence of mrm. This is to be carried out with reference to the ideal role that a democratic state is obliged to play in a multicultural society like India.