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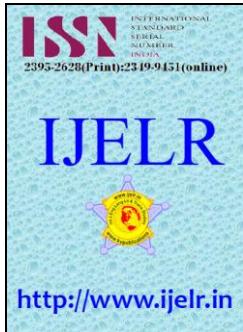
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CULTURAL & HISTORICAL ROOTS, ROOTLESSNESS AND
LITERARY REVOLUTION OF ABORIGINALS OF AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT



The paper attempts to contextualize and introduce Aboriginal Australian histories, cultures and literatures. It would discuss different perspectives from which their background has been viewed. It would touch upon a few fundamental questions such as; who were the Aboriginals? What were their roots? How had they been uprooted and made to live as aliens in their own land (insider – outsider)? What were the cultural practices of Aboriginals? When and why did Aboriginal Australian literature begin (Realization of ‘Self’)? What is the purpose and function of this literature? What are the aesthetics of it? What are the forces behind the emergence of the literature? What is the contemporary condition of the literature alongside their mainstream literature?

Key Words: Aboriginals of Australia, Terra-Nullius, Mabo & Ors vs. Queensland, Evil-Race, Rootlessness, ‘Double-Consciousness’, Literary-Revolution

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We are many mobs with many countries, but we have become mixed up. We were put together without thought for our differences and attachment to our countries... We are made into what are called “Australian Aborigines” or now ‘Aboriginal Australians’, though we were never a single mob... Us Mobs are like that – different families, different cultures, and the blossoms of these families of trees spread their pollen to fertilise the great tree which is Australia... We are a singularity in diversity and that singularity is Australia (Mudrooro vi).

‘SELF’ REALISATION:

‘Know Thy Self’ the Apollonian maxim denotes self-introspection and inspires search for selfhood. The maxim inevitably leads to question ‘WHO AM I?’ Some call it the process of realization/enlightenment. Everyone, a theist or an atheist, believer or skeptic, rich or poor, man or woman, young or old, at some point of time confronts this question. But one must consider the reasons that urge a person to ask such a question at all. The path of life is a multi-tangled complex-web; a multi-fold mystery concealed from everyone and remains eternally mystery. Constant battles between virtues and vices; though what is right and what is wrong in an endless debate, involving compatibility of *comparisons* and *contrasts*.

But what is it that actually urges a person to arrive at such a question? Life, as I argued is full of comparisons and contrasts. When a person is treated peculiarly by the same society in which s/he lives or is subjected to degradation, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, subjugation, cruelty, inhumanity; or has no

access to fulfill fundamental needs in day-to-day life. Though s/he is a human and has same civic rights as *the people*, the Whites and the Upper castes, who treat her/him differently based on prejudice. Out of such a broken-heart, and desperation, augmented by flames of fury, emanate/arise a question “who am I?”

In general, people take life for granted until life becomes challenging or is threatened. In a ravaged and poor society, where there is a daily struggle for life, the poor do not have the leisure or mood to worry about worldly matters. They can only worry about how to feed themselves, living their hand-to-mouth existence. The poverty that traps these poor people in a vicious circle gives them no chance, even to ponder over the causes of their poverty or how to escape from the trap.

On the other hand, people from the affluent societies have lots of spare time, for the pursuit of their ideals and hobbies. The richer the society, the greater will be the number of people with the leisure to pursue research, study and evolve. But the people in such societies should not take their lives for granted including their living conditions, heritage, history, and worldly affairs. Tanjuket argues that the daily struggle for survival is not an excuse for avoiding the truth about our ‘human blunders’ in the past and the present. The lack of time, according to him, is different from the lack of “will power” to face up the truth. The plain truth is that most Dalits and Aboriginals / oppressed people are too apathetic to worry about anything beyond securing and sustaining their daily needs and handling their ‘hiccups’. He goes on to say that oppressed people failed to realize that, it is exactly this apathy, this avoidance of the basic truth that creates and perpetuates their present misery and the opportunities for the ‘Evil-Race’ (British) to enforce their unending ‘white slavery’ on the Aboriginals. On the other hand, he declares, the evil race had awoken to the fact that life could not be taken for granted. The search for the truth and material possessions was their way to eradicate their misery and curse (*The 500 Years of Curse, 1492-1992*, 1-5). Tanjutek is of the opinion that for the survival of the oppressed people, someone must ‘expose’ or voice the plain truth behind the evil race’s 1000 centuries of carnage and the present designs against humanity. By exposing the evil race’s ‘hypocrisy’ and ‘menace’, it is hoped that the oppressed would be able to deny the evil race a second chance to ‘carnage and theorize’ the entire ‘history’ again, this time perhaps to the world’s extinction.

To expose the design of the ‘Evil Race’, or to arrive at the answer to ‘who am I?’ the oppressed must voice it out to the world through literature. And in order to write about someone or something s/he must be thorough with her/his socio-cultural, economic-political past.

Murali quotes Weintraub, who refers to the historical and cultural factors that led to the emergence of ‘autobiography’ as a distinct genre in the West. In an essay titled, “*Autobiography and the Historical Consciousness*,” Weintraub writes that, “Autobiography genre took on its full dimension and richness when Western Man acquired a thoroughly historical understanding of his existence” (Cited in Murali 2).

While cultural and political histories of the West played a significant role in the emergence of the autobiography as a distinct genre in the West, in Australia it is an entirely different and desperate set of historical, social and cultural factors that led to the emergence of Aboriginal autobiography and literature. A thorough understanding of one’s past is necessary to write on behalf of their communities. In his book, *Living Black*, Kevin Gilbert Whites says “White people’s devaluation of Aboriginal life, religion, culture, and personality caused the thinking about self and race that I believe in the key to modern Aboriginal thinking” (Cited in Rani 7).

As Gilbert says, the Aboriginals’ realization of ‘selfhood’ starts only when their life, religion, culture and personality have been devalued by the Whites. The process of knowing *one’s self* in Australia, surprisingly, leads an Aboriginal to a ‘Double – Consciousness’. Murali refers to Donald Eugene’s observations on W.E.B.Du Bois’s concept of “Double - Consciousness” as follows:

Born in a world which yields him no true self – consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul with tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two reconciled strings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps from being torn asunder (Cited in Murali 71).

Similarly, Aboriginal subjectivity constitutes ‘double consciousness of submission to and revolt against’ race oppression both at the same time. These people feel as if they are ‘outsiders’ within which they are supposed to be the ‘insiders’. The phenomenon of insider –outsider prevails in all the segregated societies in the world. A binary of ‘Self’ and the “Other” is constantly at loggerheads; leaving them to know or feel like asking the question—who am I? From the way they are gazed at by their so-called ‘colonizers’.

ABORIGINAL HISTORY & CULTURE:

John Rickard in his *The Present and the Past- Australia a Cultural History* gives a detailed analysis of the cultural history of Aborigines of Australia. Stuart Macintyre too provides a historical account of Aborigines and the Whites in his *A Concise History of Australia*. In response to the questions which deal with the genesis of Australia. He brings forth two versions of Australia’s origin.

A version of history which is taught to generations of school children and set down in literature, the art, memorials and anniversaries suggests that Australian history commenced at the end of the 18th century when the English naval lieutenant James Cook sailed the eastern coast in 1770. He named it New South Wales and claimed possession in the name of his monarch. On 26 January, 1788, Arthur Phillip assumed governance over the eastern half of the country. Thousand officers, troops, civilian officials and felons who landed at Sydney from the eleven vessels of the *First Fleet* formed a bridgehead for later immigrants, who spread out over the continent, explored and settled, possessed and subdued it. Further, the first version says that the newcomers brought with them:

...potent agents of European Civilization: the objective rationality of the enlightenment, belief in human capacity, moral certainty through Christianity, capitalist market, and many scientific researches. Thus, the history of Australia formed a late chapter in British, European and world history (Stuart 1-2).

The second version of Australian history ,as Stuart puts it, is that by the end of the 20th century it was no longer possible to maintain the fiction of Australia as *terra nullius* which describes Australia as a land that lacked human habitation, law, government or history until its settlement by the British in 1788. According to him an alternative beginning was apparent:

The easier landmass of Sahul, a larger island-continent that extended North worlds into Papua New Guinea and embraced the present island of Tasmania- was the site of a civilization of unique longevity. It was peopled at least 40,000 years ago. The growing recognition of this vastly enlarged Australia history spoke to late-twentieth-century sensibility. It revealed social organization, ecological practices, languages, art forms and spiritual beliefs of great antiquity and richness (Stuart 4).

As Stuart says, the second version of Australian history begins not at A.D 1788 but at least 40,000 and possibly 60,000 or more years before. Similarly, John Rickard observes that the “Aborigines have been in Australia at least 40,000 years. They must have come from “South-east Asia” (4). Pool Ross also comments, based on archaeological evidence that, “Aborigines had lived there for at least 60,000 years. The Aborigines have been in Australia “forever” (129-42).

If people live in a land for many years, it is expected that over time they would develop cultural practices and modes of livelihood, in tandem with the environment. Becket says that though there is very little documented history about Aboriginal culture, “artifacts” show that these people were hunters and gatherers in “nomadic, family-centered tribes.” They were “artists” and “storytellers”. Their religion taught them “oneness with nature”, and their social hierarchy was based on “principles of justice” (97-115).

The pattern of Aboriginal settlement developed over thousands of years. Eventually there came to be approximately “500 and 600 dialects and languages.” Ross also says that Aborigines had “500 tribal groups” ([Rickard 5; Ross 129]. Subsequently, there certainly arises a simple question about the homogeneity of Aboriginal culture. If Aboriginals were as many as 500 to 600 tribes, then how can there be *homogeneity* in their culture? Perhaps it is their fight against their *common enemy*, the White colonizers, that binds them together and creates the phenomenon of their homogenous culture. As quoted from Mudrooroo in the beginning the Aboriginals constitute different families, different cultures; a singularity in diversity. Further, Mudrooroo states that, “Our identity does not rest in an imagined Australian Aborigine, but in regionality-for

example, Nyungar- and beneath that, at the local level, there is the tribal title" (*Us Mob* 11). Ross and Rickard observe that by 1788 there might have been a total Aboriginal population of about 7,50,000. At the turn of the 20th century, when the Australian Commonwealth was formed, the Aboriginal population was around 95,000 and by 1930 it was down to 74,000. By 1991, however, it had recovered to around 2,40,000, despite having experienced many carnages and genocides during colonialism.

MYTHS OF CREATION:

As an integral part of their culture, the Aboriginals have a 'myth of creation' which contradicts the myth of creation of the Christian Bible. For example, while the Snake in the Bible symbolizes Evil/Satan, for Aboriginals it is holy. By narrating their own creative myth, they assert their different culture from that of the White-colonizers.

For the Aboriginals, rocks, trees, water-holes, animals, birds and other objects of nature are intimately experienced and integrated through myth and ritual into a spiritual universe of extraordinary richness. They believe in spirit-beings which express themselves in creating or actually becoming the physical details of the Aboriginal world. Thereby they gave a meaning to their land and life. They believe that these spirit beings have independence and unpredictability beyond explanation and can manifest in any form. The "rainbow-serpent" which is found in most Aboriginal mythologies has many interpretations. The serpent is commonly depicted in its terrifying form with a kangaroo-like head and crocodile tooth, ears or crown of feathers, long, spiked body and fish tail. It usually inhabits the waterholes; the serpent is also the arching rainbow in the sky. Thus the rainbow-serpent is a symbol of water and life. Sometimes it is also an ancestral being. For a tribe called *Gunwinggu*, the serpent became a woman *Ngalyod*, who with her husband *wuragoes*, travelled the country carrying her digging stick and net bag. When Wuragoes sought to lie with her, Ngalyod was apt to return to her serpent form, but their union produced children who were the first *hunwinggu*.

For another group named *Murinbater* the rainbow-serpent became a man called *Kunmanggur*, who made the musical instrument, the *didjeridu*, from a bamboo stalk. When he blew it hard with the reverberation of its strange music several flying foxes flew out of its end. Kunmanggur decided to make people, and when he blew again a boy and girl emerged.

In some myths, the spirit beings that created the familiar world of the Aborigines came across the sea from another place. According to the '*Djanggawul*' epic song cycle, 'two sisters and a brother' came from somewhere far away, but the journey celebrated is from *Bralgu*, the Island of spirits. Reaching the mainland, they continued their journey, making 'wells and trees', and through such acts 'investing the land with meaning'. Then following proper ritual preparations, children are removed from the wombs of the sisters. "The world of the Yirrkala people begun to take shape" (Rickard 3-5).

Besides these myths of creation, the Aborigines have rich and vibrant cultural practices which have been handed down from generation to generation. To travel beyond one's county was to go outside one's world; it was hazardous spiritually as well as materially. Aboriginal culture has many separate cultures, constituting about 500 groups.

Aboriginals have distinct physical features. Can Aboriginals be identified as "Tribes?" Rickard argues that "Tribe" is an inappropriate word to describe an Aboriginal community because "there was no chieftain, and the community came together infrequently, and only for ceremonial purposes." However, relationships were "governed by a complex web of structures." At the base was the family—a man, his wife or wives (monogamy was encouraged) and their children. The total community was usually divided into moieties which had important social and ritual function. So, all were aware of their position in society, and accordingly the nature of their relationship to other members. The entire society was like a family in which the individual member had a clear "knowledge of obligations and responsibilities of social intercourse." So it was possible to live one's whole life without meeting anyone who was a "Stranger" (Rickard 5-6).

Then, is it proper to call Aborigines nomads? Rickard argues that to describe Aborigines as nomads is "misleading if it suggests aimlessness," because in fertile regions Aboriginal communities were made more settled down (Rickard 6). One may ask as to what might be their daily routine? The daily routine, as Rickard observes, is 'hunting'. They hunted with much ingenuity, "Kangaroos, wallabies, emus and a range of smaller

marsupials." Fishing too was important. Women and children used to gather vegetables, fruits, eggs, shellfish and honey. And food generally was shared – the band was a cooperative unit. Women's food gathering was fundamental to the economy (Rickard 6-8).

RELIGIOUS AND RITUALISTIC LIFE:

"Storytelling and rituals were main characteristics of Aboriginal life" and they were easily "accommodated." Ritual had more than a social function, for it was vital to the maintenance of the community. Some rites were "dramatic re-enactments in song and dance of the deeds of the spirit-beings or heroes." Some others were concerned with representing the natural environment and, therefore, were seen as fundamental to immediate survival. Others were essential rites of initiation or death. All were characterized by great energy and commitment. The community got revitalized by their performance. One of the amazing rites of Aborigines was "Male-Initiation". The rites were complex. Circumcision was widely performed; sub-incision was to a lesser extent. Initiation often involved a "symbolic death and rebirth." The boy would be taken away from the main camp and the woman would remain for a while wailing in formal grief at their loss. In the distance elders swing bullroars – a sacred wooden object, the howling sound which represented the voice of a spirit-being, perhaps the rainbow-serpent, which would duly "swallow the boy and vomit him back into a new life" (Rickard 10).

Traditional Aboriginal society was imbued with a religious view of life and ritual, and was harnessed to its expression. Particular people acquired ritual responsibilities as there was no chieftain. The religion lacked "secular organization". The nearest thing to a priest was the medicine-man (or clever man). At one level the medicine-man was a doctor, who by ordinary or magical means cured illness. He might also be a sorcerer capable of using magic to harm or punish others. The medicine-man was respected because he had access to the spirit-beings and powers of the "Dreaming". The making of a medicine man required a "ritual death as initiation" (Rickard 11-12).

Aboriginal religion was "life-oriented. It contained no sense of sin or personal salvation, and death, while it did not destroy the spirit, offered no promise of a heavenly life-after" as the Christianity did. Death, for them, was therefore, something of a "puzzle". At one level there was a tendency, particularly if a person died short of old age, to blame the exercise of malevolent power- the sorcery of another people (Rickard 13).

Rickard records their belief in a myth sought to explain how death had come to the world. According to the *Murinbata*; crow and crab argue about the right way to die. Crab, an old woman, shows how she would do it. She crawls into a hole and remains for some time changing her shell. When crab emerges from the ground everyone is happy except crow. "That takes too long", protests crow. "There is an easier way to die. This is what we should do". Telling thus crow rolls his eyes falls over backwards and dies instantly (W.E.H. Stanner 15).

Similarly, for the *Maung*, there is the myth about 'Possum and the Moon' when they were both men. They fight with 'yam sticks' and the Moon 'mortally wounds possum.' As he dies, possum says that all who come after him will also die like him forever. Moon protests that possum should have let him speak first, for although he too would die for a few days, yet he would return in the form of a new moon. Both crow and possum were responsible for Aborigines having to follow the example they had set. The option of renewal offered by crab and moon are 'pre-empted.' So, for the Aborigines life was natural and death was not. People had to be taught 'how to die' (Rickard 13).

Commenting on the purpose of death, ideas of 'right' and 'wrong' Rickard says that the mythology of death points to a fundamental feature of Aboriginal culture. It looks motivation and 'morality'. It was not pertinent to ask why crow or possum behaved that way. The myth does not tell anything about it. There was no attempt to explain the need for death. Rather, the mythology simply defined the alternative ideas about 'right' and 'wrong', or appropriate and inappropriate behavior was derived from a complex interaction of social structures anchored in the land itself. So, the spirit-beings were the source of energy and life, and performed great deeds, but moral majesty was not part of their aura. There was no room in such a culture for a sense of tragedy. Suffering like death had to be accepted. The point of suffering was its material reality (12).

Speaking about some of the cultural practices, Rickard says that Aboriginal culture could sometimes ‘appear harsh to the outsider.’ Infanticide was practised, though its extent remains uncertain. Babies with ‘deformities were killed’, in the case of twins the weaker seems to have been discarded. They believe that the spirit of the dead baby simply ‘returns to its source.’ He further reveals the fact that in some areas cannibalism occurred, usually associated with rites of interment/buried. Token parts of flesh of the dead body might be eaten by certain kin, who would ‘draw strength from this communion.’ They too believe that a dried piece of flesh would also serve as a kind of ‘talisman’, which helps a man in his ‘hunting’ (13-14). We cannot describe the eating of flesh of a kin as ‘uncivilized’. Declaring them as uncivilized, we only obscure and undermine their cultural significance. They were not so much aberration from so called ‘civilized’ society where Jesus Christ’s *body and blood* are consumed in the *Eucharist* and said to have spiritual strength.

Some of the cultural practices certainly remind one of Rousseau’s term “Noble Savage” when everything and everyone at total peace, bliss and harmony. For instance, Aborigines had no concept of material wealth. Objects and implements had to be made all the time to satisfy not only requirements of daily life and ritual but also to meet ‘Kinship Obligations.’ Competition for wealth, a capitalist concept, was absent from Aboriginal culture. That’s why they did not have institutions of competition. Disputes and fights were more likely to be concerned with matters such as sexual relationships. The organization of Aboriginal life did not preclude opportunities for aggression although there were infrequent territorial disputes. Bound to their own land, people had little motive for expansion, annexation and greed. However, there were other occasions for dispute, particularly occurring from the tendency to blame the sorcery of another people for the ills of one’s own. Violence and killings were not absent from their society but for the 40,000 years of time uninterrupted occupation of the continent, the Aborigines had not found the need to develop the structures and stratagems of the formalized war. Therefore, I believe from the above instances that Aboriginal culture was the age of the *Noble Savage* with all its simplicity, purity, humanness, sharing and caring. Unlike their counter parts who were of capitalist and greedy mind-set. Rickard quotes Captain James Cook’s assessment about Aborigines during his exploration at East-Coast in 1770:

From what I have said of the Nation of New-Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon earth: but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary conveniences for much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the user of them. They live in tranquility which is not disturbed by the inequality of condition: the Earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things for life; they covet not Magnificent Houses, Household Stuff & co. they live in a warm and fine climate and enjoy a very wholesome Air: so that they have very little need of clothing and this they seem to be fully sensible of for many to whom we gave cloth & co to, left it carelessly upon the sea beach and in the woods as a thing they had no manner of use for. In short they seemed to set no value upon anything we gave them nor would they even part with anything of their own for any one article we could offer them this is in my opinion argues that they think themselves provided with all necessities of Life and that they have no superfluities.... (Rickard 18-19).

Thus Cook portrays a romantic image of the noble savage. Except for Macassans and Papuan no one had influence on Aborigines until 1770. Macassans and Papuan had huge influence on Aboriginal culture as the historians and anthropologists suggest. Maccassan words entered influence on Aboriginal music and Art. Thus Aboriginal culture responded creatively to both Papuan and Maccassan influences.

DOOM’S DAY AND MULTICULTURALISM:

Nonetheless, on 18th January, 1788 the first of the 11 fleet, the supply, entered Botany-Bay. Thus the *doom’s day of ‘Evil-Race’* had begun in the noble land.

Colonizers used wicked tactics and strategies to uproot the Aborigines from their own land. In 1770, Captain James Cook took possession of the east coast of Australia and named it New South Wales. Naming the place he occupied as New South Wales in 1770, Captain James Cook reported to the British government that it would be a good place for a settlement. The aboriginal population was decimated by British colonialism which began in 1788, when news of land’s fertility spread to Europeans causing them to begin settling in the

aborigines' land. A combination of disease, loss of land, (and thus food resources) and outright murder reduced the aboriginal population by an estimated 90% during the nineteenth and 20th century. A wave of massacres and resistance followed the settler's frontier. The last massacre was at Coniston in the Northern Territory in 1948. Poisoning of food and water has been recorded on several different occasions.

I would emphasize the fact that Australia's history from 1788 is the history of '*convicts*'. The "agrarian revolution" in Britain, and the population explosion in the cities, resulted in an increasing crime. The "American Revolution" gave a sign that no more convicts could be sent there. The only way to overcome the overcrowding in the jails was to establish a penal colony in the land discovered by Captain James Cook. The convicts would be transported, never to return to Britain. With this in mind, the British government hired nine ships and set about provisioning them, together with two naval vessels, with enough supplies to keep the seven fifty nine (759) convicts, their marine guards, some with families, and a few civil officers, until they became self-sufficient.

The first fleet left England on 13th May 1787 for the 'lands beyond the seas' – Australia. The fleet arrived at Botany Bay between 18th and 20th January 1788. However, this area was deemed to be unsuitable for settlement, so they moved north and arrived at Port Jackson on the Australian east coast on 26th January 1788 after deciding that Botany Bay was not suited for a settlement due to its lack of fresh water. The natives were wary and fearful of the settlers who referred them as Indians. Between 1778 and 1850 the English sent over 1,62, 000 convicts to Australia in 806 ships. The first 11 of these ships are today known as 'the First Fleet' and contained the convicts, marines that are now acknowledged as the 'founders' of Australia.

In all some "1, 62000 convicts were sent to Australia over a period of 80 years." Three quarters of the total were sentenced in Britain. That rest included about "6000 Irish who had crossed the channel in search of work." A few convicts came from Scotland. Many who were convicted of more conventional crimes were likely when transported, to be fortified by a sense of 'cultural protest', for the law is British alien law. Convict society was predominantly male, yet women were always there. Most of the women claimed to be single, and nearly all listed as domestic servants. What all convicts shared was 'the stigma' which society had stamped upon them: they were "outcasts banished to the end of the earth" (Rickard 25-26).

Historians say that by 1850 the total population of Australian colonies was still a half a million, but "the discovery of gold" in 1851, "hat on hills of the California rush," over night the colonies had all the immigrants they desired – within a decade the population had more than doubled. "It was around 5, 40,322 in 1861 in California itself" (Rickard 32). Thus, the entire Australia was spread out with aborigines, convicts (from different countries), migrants, immigrants etc, and paved a new way for a new culture with miscellaneous dimensions i.e., *multiculturalism*.

ROOTLESSNESS:

Suneetha Rani argues that a number of Aboriginal people, even children, were massacred during early colonization. Women were "sexually exploited, raped, abused, tormented and subjugated." She further says that, "flour and water holes were poisoned, aborigines buried alive, and were tied to trees for shooting practice. Blankets used by people suffering from deadly and infectious diseases in London were given to the aboriginal people. Terrible venereal diseases were transported into their midst by the Whites" (16-17). Thus, the distribution of blankets which contain contagious diseases has become one of the most effective methods through which Aborigines were killed in their own land.

Rickard and Poole mention that Aborigines could hardly be treated as immigrants, moreover, they were ignored, and their very existence was almost expunged from the national consciousness. So the "constitution laid down that they shouldn't be counted at the census as the members of the Australian population. As a race Aborigines were dying out but by 1930s." There was a beginning of an agitation led by "anthropologists and church missionaries" to recognize a positive responsibility for the "welfare of Aborigines" (130, 42). Aborigines were not counted as members at the census because of fact that they were considered non-existent or 'invisible' bodies in their own land. It must be mentioned here that there was a huge blow to the Aboriginal culture, history and lives due to selfish *European Civil Wars* (commonly known as two World Wars; though wars mostly involved European countries). Aborigines were jobless; therefore, they enlisted

themselves in the army on behalf of the British. They were allured with good life by the Whites if they could enlist in the army.

"Aborigines were denied full citizenship until 1967, and were subjected to barbaric and contradictory policies of forced assimilation and forced discrimination. Their culture and way of life had been so brutally eroded that in some cases it had disappeared even beyond the possibility of recuperation" (Poole 129). To answer the question of assimilation, accommodation and how the Aborigines managed to survive in spite of these many hurdles, Jupp argues:

A series of introduced frontiers spread over the continent and engulfed the Aboriginal population in a demographic and social catastrophe. The devastation of the aboriginal population would have been almost complete if this were the whole story. However, the attempt by Aborigines to reach accommodation with the settlers was the real foundation for population recovery (Jupp 139).

Thus, the Aborigines managed to survive threats to their total uprooting, extinction and annihilation by adaptation, assimilation and accommodation to the Colonizers' culture.

In 1967, the Australian government abolished constitutional section 127 which says, "In reckoning the numbers of the people of the commonwealth ... Aboriginal natives shall not be counted". Thus Aborigines were belatedly become as members of the Australia. They got referendum that allowed them to vote. They were "granted" citizenship only in 1967 in their own land (Rickard 232). Poole notes that facts regarding dispossession and genocide in Australia are similar to that in New Zealand and America, the only difference in the Australian case is "the absence of any recognition of a pre-existing legal and political status." The colonial history of North America is littered with treaties made between settlers and indigenous groups. In New Zealand "the Treaty of Waitangi" was signed by 500 Maori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown in 1840. If the British were to break these treaties, indigenous people had legal rights over their lands. Nothing like this happened in Australia. Aborigine groups were not treated as political societies. Instead, the Whites advanced into the continent rationalized by the myth of "terra-nullius" (Poole 130). 'Terra-nullius' is a Latin expression which means 'empty land' or 'no man's land.' The phrase had been pronounced at the time of British colonisation in 1788. This myth of terra-nullius has been over turned in 1992 in the case of 'MaboVs Queensland.' Eddie Mabo and Ors Vs the State of Queensland – the effective result of this judgment was to invalidate and revoke the declaration of 'empty land' and to recognize a form of native title. Four months after Mabo's death judgment was given in favour of the Aboriginal land rights. This judgment paved the way to the native title legislation and to the establishment of the native title tribunal for hearing Aboriginal claims to the land (Poole 130-31). Leither says:

Aborigines were deprived of their land, their sacred site, and of the control over their environment. As they could not encroach on other tribes' land, they had no other way than to submit to their invaders. The demographic effects were disastrous and the population was halved within 70 years. Aborigines were forced in to rescues and missions which did not respect tribal patterns and catered people from unrelated, distant lands (Leither 70).

It would be appropriate to quote Tanjutek to describe the ways through which Aborigines have been devastated in all spheres of life. He says that White people's rule in the world is a 'curse' that has devastated humanity, created and left behind a trail of disasters and tragedies on all the surviving races around the world. The dangers and scars are still transparent in the colonized nations. (This can be also said as the *white man's burden*). The following, according to him, are some of the most unforgettable, irreparable and permanent trademarks, legacies or damages inflicted on the colonized world by the British colonization:

1. Global high sea piracy.
2. Global invasion and occupation.
3. World- wide outbreak of deadly ER diseases and epidemics.
4. Extermination and genocide of other civilizations.
5. Unprecedented ecological devastation.
6. Evil race current brutality and human rights abuse.
7. Assassination of countless cultures and societies.
8. Rape of women worldwide.
9. Ill- gotten wealth and bloodstained treasures.
10. International gangster and terrorist acts.
11. Merchant of death, destruction and disease.
12. Economic exploitation.
13. Black slavery.
14. Racism.
15. Piracy of basic technology from an ancient civilisation.
16. Evil race export of misery and dark ages (Tajnutek 41-61).

These factors, either directly or indirectly, helped the British in uprooting and destroying the rich and vibrant Aboriginal culture. With such evil tactics and strategies, the British managed to uproot, label and dehumanize the Aborigines in their homeland.

As Rickard says, "Colonization is a relationship, even a mentalite' and one from which Australia had found it difficult to escape...." (Rickard 38). White man's colonization and its effects not only affected the physical and empirical factors but also they have deeply embedded and become an integral part of colonized psyche, which has turned out as White man's burden; cultural imperialism. The burden is nothing but the negative and derogatory *labels* which the Aboriginals have been carrying with lots of shame and inferiority complex. For this reason the Aboriginal writer, Mudrooroo, calls the entire process of the European invasion as:

To Us Indigenous Mobs, the arrival of the first wave of invaders (those who came to settle and take up land, dispossess and deprive us of our inheritance, so that what we once owned, what has been passed on to us from our ancestors, no longer belonged to us) is but an interlude in our long possession of Australia. It is a traumatic period which needs healing... (IV).

As argued above the entire period is traumatic, and the Aboriginals have to live with it. Having completed exploring the cultural and historical roots of the Australian Aboriginals and the ways in which they were totally uprooted from their own land, I would like to bring forth some of the forces which lead to the emergence of Aboriginal literature.

LITERARY REVOLUTION:

No literature can be studied in isolation. There is a direct relationship between sociopolitical milieus. Therefore, literature must be examined and evaluated in terms of social environment which surrounds it and the historical events which precede it. It is clear that all literatures are context specific and culture specific; they carry a whole lot of cultural history, ideology and are changed with certain unexpected accidents and expected incidents. As Aboriginal literature springs from such contexts, I cannot ignore to introduce their history and culture without which we can't understand and interpret them. Therefore, I furnished a brief account of socio-cultural and economic-political situation of Aboriginals of Australia.

I feel it is essential to raise a few fundamental questions about Aboriginal Australian literature. When did Aboriginal literature begin? What were the conditions and forces behind which had led the emergence? Why did this literature begin? What are the basic functions and purposes of their literature? What are the literary values? What are Aboriginal literary aesthetics?

According to Belinda Wheeler, "Australian Aboriginal literature has become an integral component of Australian literature and a recognized canon in its own right. This is despite a number of historical atrocities and a government infrastructure and a white majority's 'way of life' that continues to oppress many Australian Aboriginals" (Wheeler 13). In the light of the above quotation it is pertinent to trace the roots of the emerging Australian Aboriginal literature. As the old saying goes "inequality is the mother of all revolutions" it aptly suits to Aboriginal Australian literature because the literature had emerged out of inequality and discrimination. Aboriginal literature had emerged as an expression of 'protest/revolution' against their barbaric oppressors; Whites. 'Protest' stands out as a dominant factor in literature; the protest to unlabel the negative labels. Aboriginal writers also see the writing as 'healing'. Mudroro says that the European invasion "is a traumatic period which needs healing, and perhaps 'Aboriginal' studies may be seen as part of that healing process" (iv). So, the corpus of literature which was produced about Aboriginals, and its study, for him, is one of the ways of alleviating from the cruel wounds and scars that had been inflicted upon them for two hundred years.

The Aboriginals could not complain against the inhuman atrocities perpetuated against them because either they were not trusted or were blamed for having asked for it. It is in this context of utter deprivation that these people write as it helps them to express their trauma born through two centuries. Thus "Aboriginal suffering and Aboriginal activism", as Rani says, led to the emergence of Aboriginal literature (8). Rani quotes Melissa Lucashenko who observes – "Aboriginal writing to me at the moment is a protest literature. I suppose and it is centered around land and social justice and legal stuff" (9). Aboriginal literary discourse emerges from the Aboriginal suffering as the new history of colonized people expressing themselves in the language of the

colonizer. Two centuries of mute predicament, exploitation, oppression and discrimination explode in Aboriginal literature, providing a master key to the element of revolution/protest in Aboriginal literature. Protest acts as a weapon and resistance as strategy for Aboriginal writers if literature is the "battlefield". These writers narrate the inhuman treatment meted out to them under their colonizer. These writings are reflections of their long time sense of anger and protest. They don't simply accept their predicament but persuade towards change. Thus, literature and activism go hand in hand. This protest against racial discrimination is used either directly or indirectly, either strongly or subtly, either 'consciously' or 'unconsciously' (Rani 55). Moreover, it is necessary to enquire as to "How many non-Indigenous Australian writers have used Aboriginal experience or culture in their work, in an often one sided imaginative response?" (Wheeler Foreward). Aboriginal writing is perhaps the necessary answer to such a query according to Wheeler.

History reveals the fact that, behind every literature produced in the world there is certainly a strong starting point and indelible impact of some incidents or people. Logically, Aboriginal literature too has a starting point and an impact of some people and incidents. Though Aboriginal literature started as early as 1920's yet its full-fledged boom and development of protest had immense inspiration in the course of 1960s. The "American Civil Rights Movement" had a strong impact on Aboriginal literature as there was already contact between America and Australia during the Second World War. Civil Rights movement inspired Aboriginals to voice out for 'their right' through their pens (Rikard 234).

In 1960's some Australians found it difficult to identify with historical image of Australia being presented. Writers who felt most deprived had ventured into autobiography. They deliberately sought to create the history which they lacked. As argued in the beginning of the paper, these authors felt the necessity to pose the question- 'who am I?' Hal Porter subtitled his *The Watcher on the Cast – Iron Balcony* (1963): *An Australian Autobiography*. Donald Herne's *The Education of Young Donald* (1967). He invented the world "sociography" to describe the kind of personal – social history he was embarking on. George Johnson's *My Brother Jack* (1964). These three writers helped to find a flourishing autobiographical tradition, which focused particularly on childhood (Ricard 294-97). David Unaipon's *Native Legends* 1929, first book by an Australian Aboriginal wanted to ensure that an enduring record of Aboriginal customs, beliefs and thoughts were preserved. William Ramsay Smith's *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigine* is published in 1930 without acknowledgement of David Unaipon as the original author. Oodgeroo Noonuccal's publishing *We are Going*, the first book of poetry by Aboriginal in 1964. Sally Morgan's path-breaking Autobiography *My place*, 1987. Establishment of *Magabala Books*; first Aboriginal Independent Publishing house in 1990. "Bringing Them Home Report" of 2000, etc., are some of the significant events which further boosted the emerging Aboriginal writing.

Aboriginal literature has had a specific and precise purposes and functions. Although, most of the Aboriginal literature deals with the colonial predicament, it is not confined to the "colonizer-colonized" discourses alone. Aboriginal has multi-dimensional functions. Significantly, it has *dual* function; it functions as an introduction to people's history and their present predicament, and it functions as an eye-opener to non-Aboriginal people. This literature mirrors historical, political, cultural and economic discourse. As Prof. Rani aptly quotes Anne Brewster:

For white Australians this education has the purpose of revealing the violence of colonization which has been suppressed in official histories. For Aboriginal people the narration of the past has additional role of producing a sense of unity and group solidarity. The awareness of a common past can also thus bind together people who have been disposed (10).

Thus Aboriginal literature can doubly function in educating both the groups and bringing consciousness and unity among Aboriginals. Aboriginal literature also functions as vehicle to convey writers' protest and resistance. They attempt in all possible ways to deconstruct and decolonize history which was constructed by the Whites; the Colonisers. They also 'reconstruct' the Aboriginal identity from their own point of view. Aboriginal literature also explores historical events of colonization and its past effects. Though the writers write extensively on different topics, there is always a community approach to literature. In the Contemporary period, Aboriginal Literature surpasses the boundaries, and explores literatures of all genres and styles,

including drama, film, music, children, adult, gothic, humor, etc., under its emerging canon. Alexis Wright Carpentaria won "Miles Franklin Literary" Award 2007. Kim Scott won the same award for *Benang: From the Heart*, 2000 and *That Deadman Dance*, 2010. Some of the prominent Aboriginal Australian authors are; Edward Warrigal Anderson ,Faith Bandler , Larissa Behrendt,Lisa Bellear ,Roger Bennett ,Mary Carmel Charles ,Ali Cobey Eckermann, Wesley Enoch, Lionel Fogarty, Richard Frankland ,Kevin Gilbert ,Jane Harrison ,Ruth Hegarty, Dan Ilic, Anita Heiss, Ruby Langford Ginibi , Sally Morgan, Mudrooroo, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Doris Pilkington Garimara, Kim Scott, Dr D. Bruno Starrs , Margaret Tucker, Glenyse Ward, Samuel Wagan Watson, Sam Watson, Herb Wharton, Tara June Winch, Alexis Wright , Bruce Pascoe, etc.

The values associated with Aboriginal movements need to be understood within the broad spectrum of democratic values and humanity. Liberty, equality, and fraternity are the chief values advocated not only by Aboriginals but all the oppressed in the world. Aboriginal people aspire to become free and live independently sharing all the natural resources equally with others. They demand the restoration of rights that were grabbed away from them.

Before discussing the aesthetics of Aboriginal literature, we must understand the very nature of their literature. Aboriginal literature is not imaginative creations like mainstream literature. It emulates the mainstream literature in their respective countries but is not institutionalized. Mainstream literature is fantastic, fictitious, imaginative, abstract, and transcendental, and it uses glossy bombastic idiocy and figures of speech. Aboriginal literature is documentations of concrete realities of lives of Aborigines. They reflect suffering, poverty, humiliation, hunger, oppression, exploitation, discrimination, segregation and so on of these people. Aboriginal literature is a 'collective counter articulations,' because an individual's articulation for or against their oppressors represents the entire community's voice. This is not literature for pleasure sake but for the sake of their identity and alternative culture.

Even *Black Arts Movement* of America does not want to abide by the canonical White American principles of aesthetics as the Blacks have their own way of expressing things because their experiences certainly differ from their colonizers'.

Therefore, I conclude that the Aboriginal writers prefer to *destroy* and *unlabel* the old literary constraints and their oppressors' social values. It's another form of protest; a counter revolution. A few constraints of old art are still found though the content change. It is so because they want to prove to the mainstream writers that they too can write as they do. As the content changes, automatically change occurs in the kind of language, grammar, ornamentation, genres and expression – which are nothing but aesthetics. 'To break off' is the motto of Aboriginal literature. They do deconstruct and establish aesthetics which serve their purpose and function.

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