Chapter II

Indigenous People of Australia, Canada, US and Tamil Nadu (India):
A Study of their (Hi)story

“In all of us there is a hunger, marrow-deep, to know our heritage- to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning.”

- Alex Haley


“Representation in the mediated “reality” of our mass culture is in itself Power”

-Larry Grass

*“Ethics of (Mis)Representation”* (1991) P.21

This chapter will serve as a study of the history of the Indigenous peoples of Australia, Canada, US and Tamil Nadu (India). In view of the fact that a complete and comprehensive analysis of the history of those Indigenous peoples will warrant writing volumes of research materials, this chapter will limit itself to an analysis of some of the major issues in the history of the Indigenous peoples and that besides only as recounted through some of their select narrations. Keeping faith in the Native Sensibility, the chapter will rely much less either on the years or the chronological specificities or even for that matter the historical documents for references. Rather being dependent on the ‘authoritative’ and ‘objective’ academic texts for understanding the history of the Indigenous peoples, the memories cherished by the Indigenous peoples in the forms of origin myths, oral histories, songs and other legends are used for this study.

The chapter is divided into three sections-

1. Pre-Colonial Past of the Indigenous Peoples,
2. Colonial Encounters and
3. The Aftermaths of Colonialism.
The Indigenous peoples’ perspective on the arrival of the colonial peoples into their lands, and their encounters with them; and their views on some of the contemporary issues which are caused primarily by the colonial powers will be discussed in this chapter. The objective of this chapter is to establish through a study of their histories, the rich cultural heritage of the Indigenous people passed on through their memories, and further to highlight how these people suffer by the loss of such memories which are primarily perpetuated by the invading cultures.

I. Pre-Colonial Past of the Indigenous Peoples

William McNeil in his *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (2009) critically comments on the dubious role of history as narratives of power and control. He points out that History as an academic discipline remains only as a story of ‘rise and fall of empires’, and as a chronicle of reigns, wars, battles, and military and political revolutions. For him, history is more a ‘story of power’- the story of ‘who tames whom and who controls whom’. As observed earlier, the elitist and the academic history to this day remain only such ‘stories of power’. In such histories, the oppressor is the one who often determines the history of the oppressed. While true history is shaped by the actual involvement of real people- the people in flesh and blood (not some imaginary heroes) belonging to all sections of the society, such academic histories privilege only the people with power besides indulging in seriously undermining the significance of the role played by the oppressed communities. In this scenario, the history of the Indigenous peoples in the eyes of the invaders continues to be seen just as a bundle of myths and fantasies. The oppressive objectivity of the west often ridicules the stories of the Indigenous communities which were cited as their history. The linear notion of history of the west persistently demoralizes the Indigenous peoples’ dynamic circular view of time.
It has to be noted here that, for most Indigenous peoples, the idea of history itself was rather remote and complex. The idea of documented and ‘authenticated’ history was unheard of among the Indigenous peoples of most parts of the world. Their history is in their stories. The memories in the stories they transmit orally from one generation to the other carry their history, rather their story, and it is these memories they cherish collectively form their identity.

As noted in “Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method”, there are two ways in which the “sense of past” is produced, namely, Public Representations and Shared/Collective Memories (76). The source of public representation comprises of different agents primarily working for the dominant institutions and such sources invariably stand for the idea of ‘dominant memory’ that attempts at consolidating the power relations. The public representations that exist in the forms of monuments, sculptures, paintings, temples, documents, scriptures and etc have proved consistently to be the sources of the dominant memory. The collective/shared memory on the other hand is built around people. Contrary to the complaints posed against its ‘authenticity’, it only helps history by thrusting life into it and even widens its scope. It brings history into, and out of, the community. In short it provides a means for radical transformation of the social meaning of history.

Relying primarily on such memories transmitted through the ‘origin myths’ and similar legends of the Indigenous peoples, this part of the chapter will discuss the pre-colonial legacies of the Indigenous peoples. These origin tales are shared among the Indigenous peoples for hundreds of years. The memories they transmit through these stories give us a deep insight into their rich cultural life style. These stories and songs are not just fantasies; they highlight the Native sensibility which they cherish and esteem. Such new perspectives of history carried through their memories have now been proved authentic and highly resourceful. An Australian
linguist, R. M. W. Dixon in his *The Dyirbal Language of North Queensland* (1972) for instance recorded the coincidences between some of the landscape details being told about in the oral myths and the recent scientific discoveries. Dixon observes that the geological findings and other related scientific research have confirmed the accuracy in the ‘memories’ shared by the Australian Aboriginals. For example, he declares that the Aboriginal oral history’s claim that Crater Lake was formed ten thousand years before has been proved authentic by the Pollen fossil sampling from the silt which had settled to the bottom of the craters. Similarly he also notes that the origin myths that claim that the deserts of central Australia to have been very fertile ten thousand years ago was also confirmed by the geologists.

In this scenario, it is very unfortunate that the western systems of epistemology continuously resist acknowledging the validity of the Native knowledge. As lamented by Richard Broome in his *Aboriginal Australians: A History Since 1788*, unfortunately, “those from another tradition- that of science- listen not to the ancient stories of the great ancestors, but to what the human remains and rocks say” (5). It is high time now since science itself has started to acknowledge the validity of the Native knowledge, the Native memory be given its due respect it deserves. This acknowledgement, understanding and appreciation of the Native memory are what were desired by the great traveler and ethnographer John Mclean. McLean in the preface to his classical work, *Canadian Savage Folk: The Native Tribes of Canada*, published in the year 1896 observes on the typical fallacious western mentality by saying:

> Close contact with the native tribes shows us the mistake we have been making in deciding that ignorance, superstition and cruelty belong to these people, and that there is no wisdom, truth or beauty in their belief and manner of life.(i)

Commenting further on the importance of acknowledging and understanding the Native memory, McLean notes,
A faithful study of the language and customs compels us to acknowledge that there are deeper truths than facts, and under the blanket and coat of skin there beats a human heart, as there is beauty, sweetness and wisdom in their traditions and courage, liberty and devotion in their lives. (i)

A study of their lifestyle, landscape, and their affinity with nature as accounted in their memories they cherish through their oral histories, myths, songs and legends indeed informs one of their wisdom and their deep sense of understanding of a variety of knowledges. Such a study will be a witness to the rich cultural heritage and tradition, as much to the unconditional devotion to all forms of lives of the Pre-Colonial Indigenous Peoples.

1. **Aborigines of the Pre-Colonial Australia:**

   Academicians, especially anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians estimate that Aboriginal society has inhabited the mainland Australia for over 40,000 years. At the time of European discovery and settlement, nearly one million Aboriginal people lived across the continent as hunters and gatherers. When Captain Cook first set foot on the shores of Australia, there were already around 318,000 to 750,000 Aborigines living in small settlements, mostly around the Murray River in the South of Australia. The Pre-Colonial Aborigines were scattered in 300 clans and some of which are *Aranda, Bidjandjadjara, Gurindji, Gunwinggu, Kamilaroi, Murngin, Tiwi, Wailbri, Wurora*, and *Yir-yoront*. They spoke nearly 250 languages and 700 dialects. Each clan had a spiritual connection with a specific piece of land but also travelled widely to trade, find water and for ritual and totemic gatherings. Though much of the vital information about the everyday lifestyle of the Pre-Colonial Australian Aborigines were lost, still there are a remarkable diverse body of documentary accounts preserved in the forms of the testimony through the rock arts and oral histories. Such sources inform one of their affinities towards the land and nature. The Aborigines who lived in different parts of the land
were distinctly different from other clans. The most significant difference in them was associated with the land they lived in. They used three major classes of weapons, namely, lances, hand-thrown and *woomeracast* spears. The most popular Aboriginal symbol- the boomerang was also used for their hunting. Using such tools, they hunted birds, large mammals and fish. Much of the Australian Aborigines wore very little clothing. As noted by John Mulvaney and Johan Kamminga in *Prehistory of Australia* (1999), “Nakedness is very much part of the popular image of traditional Aboriginal existence” (89). The prejudiced western world saw only this and considered them savage without ever caring to understand their rich cultural heritage. As noted by Robert J. Flanagan the ethnographer, in his *The Aborigines of Australia* (1888), the western world saw them as people of “physical inferiority …and isolated and unwarlike character…with utter absence of anything like concert in their habits and operations”. (2)

However, using the Native knowledge gathered through their collective memories through the ages, the Australian Aborigines led a cultured way of life which happens to belong to another dimension which the Europeans could not understand. And what they could not understand became obscene and uncultured in their eyes. The Aboriginal Australians made the famous Kangaroo pelts long before the traces of the European civilizations. These pelts were used as body insulations in extreme cold climatic condition.

Unlike the popular perception held by the West, Art is a central part of the life of Australian Aborigines and takes many forms. Traditionally it was made for purely cultural reasons and was only able to be created or viewed by people initiated to the proper level of knowledge. The Aboriginal Culture of Australia places high value on ceremonies and rituals. These ceremonial practices vitiate every aspect of the Aborigine’s life. Conventional designs and symbols are an essential part of the long traditions in Aboriginal art and rituals.
Commenting on their community living, Derek John Mulvaney and Johan Kamminga observe:

Residential groups (of the Aboriginal Australians) comprised relatives, though individuals acknowledged as ‘kin’ were not always related. The most commonly recognized residential group was the ‘band’, which varied in size, from ten to 50 people…In some regions society was divided into more inclusive social categories, such as moiety (two category), section and semi-moiety (four categories), and subsection or ‘skins’ (eight categories)…governance of Aboriginal social life was organized through religion (76).

As a significant observation on this mode of living by giving prominence to clan and community, Rev George Taplin in his *The Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines: Gathered from Inquiries Made by Authority of South Australian Government* (1879) notes:

in the clan there can be no personal property- all implements, weapons belong to the members collectively; every individual regards them as possession of his clan, and to be employed for its welfare and defense as occasion require…Everyman is interested in his neighbour’s and cares for it because it is part of the wealth of the family collectively (11).

The members therefore recognized and respected individual members of the clan as much as in cherishing their collective way of life. Leading such a collective way of life, they respected the animate and the inanimate beings equally, in fact they did much less to distinguish between them, for they saw life in everything, and everything as beings which are manifestations of a variety of spirits.
It has to be observed here that the Anthropologists have witnessed throughout the continent of Australia, cutting across the kins, clans and other social categories a cultural transaction—“an interchange of goods along a complex network of mythologically sanctioned pathways and routes (among the Aborigines)” (Mulvaney and Kamminga 93) and perhaps “this network belies the notion that the Aboriginal society was parochial and static” (93). These cultural and commercial transactions as evident in their everyday life stand testimony to their highly civilized lifestyle. It has to be observed further here that this exchange of goods itself was termed by the Aborigines as—‘ceremonial exchange cycle’ and thus highlighting their Native sensibility. This sense of ‘exchange cycle’ involves a sense of obligation and respect in terms of being the ‘giver’ and the ‘receiver’. The same mentality is observed when it comes to the relationship with Nature which they respect and adore. They see it as an obligation and responsibility to be of close affinity towards Native in being a part of the great cycle.

**Dreamtime and the Aborigines of the Pre-Colonial Australia:**

In the close-knit groups of bands where social life was organized and governed by their religion, their concept of history of habitation of Australia is immeasurable and is linked to a variety of national Dreamtime creation lores for the Australian Aborigines. The ‘Dreamtime’ stories explain how the land was created by the journeys of the spirit ancestors. Those creation stories describing the contact and the features which the spiritual ancestors left on the land are integral to the Aboriginal spirituality. Contrasting the academic historical accounts with that of the existing Aboriginal oral accounts of Dreamtime, Johan Mulvaney and Johan Kamminga notes: “For Aboriginal people, their story is contained in oral traditions handed on by their elders since Dreaming times” and he further observes that “those traditions are not necessarily in contradiction with our story yet they relate to a different intellectual
tradition where time and concepts of evidence are so different…”. (2) This difference in the conceptual understanding of time is one of the fundamental differences between the Pre-Colonial Aboriginal societies and that of the west. Aboriginal creation or Dreamtime concepts signify that nature and culture were formed at the same time by totemic spirits or ancestors who, in the Dreaming, came from the sky, underground and sea and formed the earth, rivers, valleys, hills, rocks and inlets, and established their existence along with the civilization. These areas are classified by Aboriginal people as secret and sacred sites which are simultaneously linked to totems. The totemic spirits or ancestors were believed to have had animal and plant as well as human qualities and are prototypes of the various natural species. What is significant about this idea is the depiction of the close affinity between different forms of lives. This also suggests that the Aboriginal world view perceives the creation of life as dynamic as well as an ongoing process. For Ken Coates, “these accounts of creation play a crucial part of the indigenous world view and reflect the deep and profound understanding Aboriginal peoples have of their relationship with the natural environment.” (25).

According to Colin Dean, “the term ‘Dreamtime’ is an English term coined in about 1896 by F. Gillen, and used by B. Spencer to refer to the primordial period in the religious mythologies of the Northern Arunta” (12). According to him, “for the Aborigines the world was not created ex nihilo. Rather, the pre-existing ancestral spirits transformed a pre-existing world of things and conditions into the structures they are today”(12). He further notes that “these structures are fixed once-and-for-all... This primordial period, called the ‘Dreamtime’, was the very foundation of life itself..... and is the fount of the whole Aboriginal world view”. (12) The very term ‘Dreamtime’ is known in different sense in different parts of the Aboriginal Australia, it is known as
1. ‘tjurkurrpa’, ‘jukurrpa’ and ‘tjurgurba’ among the Bidjandjadjara people of North-Western South Australia

2. ‘altjeringa’, ‘alchera’ and ‘aldjerinya’ among the Aranda people of Central Australia and

3. ‘ungud’ among the Ngarinyin people of North-Western Australia,

And these Dreamtime concepts exist in varying forms throughout the Aboriginal societies of Australia. The Aboriginal Aranda people of Central Australia for example, as noted by Richard Broome in his *Aboriginal Australians: Black Responses to White Dominance 1788-2001* (2001):

believe that sometime in the distant past, sleeping superhuman beings, who were at the onetime human and animal, spontaneously broke through the surface of the lifeless and cold earth. As they did so, the sun began to shine, the winds blew and the rains came. These great ancestors then freed the humans and breathed life into them and into the land around them (13).

All this took place in the creation period (the Dreaming), a period of time that is sacred, for it is a time that measures the very work of the gods. This sacred time is of a different dimension than ordinary time. For the Aboriginal society, there is earth time (profane time), and sacred time in which the gods dwell, and the two are not parallel. And ritual is the way to bring sacred time into contact with profane time. In performing ritual, such as an elaborate initiation ritual- which may require an entire season to complete- , they imitate the ancestors or lesser deities, and in doing so, sacred time is made contemporary with profane time. The two different realms are in contact, all as a result of ritual. In other words, the acts of the gods are made present, in the here and now, through the ritual acts of the aborigines, and it is by virtue
of this contact that primal man is renewed, strengthened, and made holy. What this further highlights is the crucial distinctive quality of the Native Sensibility through their perception of time. For the Aborigines, time is not separated into the characteristic realms of past, present and future but rather as entities that could very well meet face to face despite such differences.

“The ‘Dreamtime’, or primordial period of the Tiwi of Melville and Bathurst island” according to Colin Dean is called “palaneri”. Colin Dean further narrates that the period of palaneri was divided into three distinct phases. In the first phase the earth was a dead, silent place. There was no light and there were no birds to sing over the flat and featureless land; the earth was without hills, valleys or trees; there was nothing with any form. Into this dark silent place, for no given reason, an old blind woman called Mudungkala arose out of the ground carrying three infants. Holding her children Mudungkala crawled on her knees and made Dundas Strait, the Northern shores of Melville island. She moored the island creating the Johnson and Lethbridge bays. Mudungkala crawled over the island forming features as she moved. On reaching Murupianga, Mudungkala decreed that there should be vegetation and animals. After this she moved southward, out of knowledge of the Tiwi. In the second phase, “the two daughters of Mudungkala, Wuriupranala and Muriangkala and their brother Purukupali established themselves in the new land. Purukupali brought the Pitipituis - pre-existent children. From the children produced, the totemic ancestors came. In the third phase, the Palaneri came to an end. In this period Tukimbini, the grandson of Murupiangkala, ordered all the mythical people to establish themselves in totemic places and upon doing so they transformed themselves into inanimate objects and animals. However before the transformations, Tukimbini taught the mythical people the rules of behaviour and the laws of marriage and tribal relationships they must always obey. This instance of the ‘Dreamtime’
origin myth of the Tiwi people which has three phases- origin, sustenance and death- highlights the Aboriginal understanding of the life as a dynamic circle. And in this great circle both animate and inanimate objects are equally significant as both are incarnations of their Spirits.

Carrying such a great tradition in their memories, the Pre-Colonial Aborigines lived a life that was highly cultured despite the absence of material comforts and with the true Indigenous spirit of considering Nature as a part of the great circle, they led a life true to the laws insisted by the tales. These cited origin myths tell one of the rich cultural and social life style of the Pre-Colonial Aboriginals of Australia and their perception of time. While for the west it sounds like tales of unrealistic fantasies, in truth the essence of these ‘Dreamtime’ origin myths are profound and rich in philosophical materials. And as observed by Ken Coates “The Aborigines of Australia remember their Ancestors and the stories of Dreamtime. When they go walkabout, they are honouring the memory of their Ancestors and retracing the creation experiences of their land.” (26).

2. Sangam and Thinai as the Cultural Representations of the Original Inhabitants of Thamizhakam:

The term ‘Thamizhakam’ refers to the area comprising traditionally Tamil speaking people. Unlike the case of the Aboriginal Australians or Native Americans, the identity and the history of the Indigenous people of Thamizhakam remains to this day a mystifying area drawing serious debates among various academic fields; and the researches on this area proves to be a battlefield of contrasting ideologies. The researcher has limited only to the resources found in the songs of Sangam period and that besides only for an understanding of the history, identity and the lifestyle of the original inhabitants of Thamilakam.

Dr. K. R. Hanumanthan a famous Historian in his work Untouchability: A Historical Study up to 1500 A. D (with special reference to Tamil Nadu) (1979), records the boundary of Tamizhakam while articulating on the characteristics of the Sangam age,
It (Sangam Age) witnessed the growth of three small kingdoms namely Cēra, Cōla and Pāndya. The Cēras ruled over a territory which comprised modern Kerala and parts of Coimbatore and Salem Districts. The Cōlas ruled over the modern South Arcot, Tanjavur and Trichirapalli Districts. The Pāndyan country included the land between Kanyakumari in the South and river Vellaru in the North, Anamalai Hills in the West and the sea in the East. (22)

Drawing references from the researches on Tamil-Brahmi Scriptures of the famous archeologist and Tamil cultural scholar Iravatham Mahadevan, Karthikesu Sivathambi in his much celebrated work of Pandaya Tahamizch Chamoogathil Naadagam (Drama in Ancient Tamil Society) (2005) observes that the period of Sangam age is “between 200 B.C and 250 B.C” (xxi). Sivathambi further notes the contrasting opinions regarding the period of Sangam age by drawing references from another expert on Sangam period Vaiyapuripillai by noting his comments on the three stages of Sangam period, which being,

1. Period of First Sangam - A.D. 100-350

2. Thogai Sei Kaalam (Period of Compilation of the songs written earlier) - A.D. 450-500


However the works of K.A. Neelakanda Shasthri ‘s A History of South India (2009), Kamil Veith Zvelebil’s, Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature (1992) and others suggest that the period of Sangam age is between the years 600 BC to 300 AD.

The poems belonging to the Sangam literature were composed by Dravidian Tamil poets, both men and women, from various professions and classes of society. This collection contains 2381 poems composed by 473 poets, some 102 of whom remain anonymous.
A.K. Ramanujam in his *Interior Landscapes: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (1994) observes on these great poems:

In their antiquity and in their contemporaneity, there is not much else in any Indian literature equal to these quite and dramatic Tamil poems. In their values and stances, they represent a mature classical poetry: passion is balanced by courtesy, transparency by ironies and nuances of design, impersonality by vivid detail, austerity of line by richness of implication. These poems are not just the earliest evidence of the Tamil genius who were part of proto-Dravidian Jain culture. (115)

Unlike Vedic literature, these songs of Sangam period does not sing of the myths and fantasies but were bona fide accounts of the life style of the epoch by recording in detail the life of the aboriginal people of Thamizhakam with precision.

Sangam poetry is a highly conventionalized form of literature. It has two primary divisions of Agam and Puram. Ainkurunuru, Natrinai, Kurunthokai, Akanānuru and Kalithokai are Akam books whereas Puranānuru and Pathitruppattu are Puram books. Paripādal has both Akam and Puram songs. The concept of Thinai in these songs can be analysed with the help of muthal, karu and uri. We find these conventions in Iraiyanār Akapporul and in Poruliyal the third part of the book Tholkāppiyam.

1. **Muthal** refers to the first or principle reference that cites on the setting in time – poluthu, and place – nilam, in which the activity of the Akam poem takes place. Time is conceived of in two aspects, the time of the year, or season and the time of the day or night. Land refers to the landscape in which the poem is set. As mentioned earlier, there are five different types of lands referred in these poems namely, kurinci - mountains, hilly tracts;
mullai – forest and pasture; marutham – agricultural lands, neyta1 – lands by the seashore; pālai – desert tracts. This distinction is the basis for the idea of Thinai.

2. Karu refers to the embryo, nucleus, and refers to the various elements of flora, fauna, artifacts, inhabitants, and so on, which are native to the above mentioned types of Thinais.

3. Uri is connected with the word urimai – ownership, appropriateness, propeity, and refers to the distinctive mood that characterises each Thinai.

In Sangam period, each land had its own Muthal, Karu and Uri. And each of it represents distinct way of life relative to the respective Thinai. The influence of the characteristics of these distinctive features related to land and Thinai reflected in their poetry in the form of moods, settings, style, characters, form and content.

In his The Caste System in Tamil Nadu (2007), K. K. Pillay a popular Historian comments on the inscriptions on the aboriginal people and their origin in the Sangam Age:

we do hear of certain denominations which pertain to an earlier, i.e., the pre-historic epoch. Thus we hear of the Vettuvar, Villiyar, Irular and Pallar in the Sangam works, but they appear to have been the descendents of the pre-Tamil or pre-historic people belonging to the Proto-Austroloid or Negroid stock. Perhaps the Tudiyar, Panar, Parayar and Kadambar belonged to the class of original tribes. (23)

Regarding the distinctions that existed among the aboriginal people of Thamizhakam, he further notes that “the indigenous social stratification among the early Tamils was based on the Physiographic Distinctions, which led to different occupations” (25). And later records that the five-fold divisions based on the Physiographic Distinctions were Palai, Kurinchi, Mullai, Marudam and Neydal which had the inhabitants Maravar, Kuravar, Ayar, Ulavar and Paradavar respectively. Detailing the same point K.R.Hanumanthan scripts:
The Kurinchi region was inhabited by people who specialized in hunting. They were ‘Eyinar, Vettuvar, Kanavar and Kuravar’. The Eyinar used to hunt Eyman (a kind of pig) and Mulavuman (a kind of deer). ...the Vettuvar used to hunt animals with their murderous bow and arrow. The Kanavar who lived in the forests, used to hunt pigs and elephants with their iron arrows and lances...the main vocation of the Kuravar was forest cultivation. But they also engaged themselves in hunting and used bows and arrows....The Mullai region was inhabited by people who specialized in dairy farming and sheep-rearing. ...It is probable that Kovalar, Itaiyar and Antar represented three distinct social units of the same region specializing in different vocations....Marutam was the only region which was best fitted for cultivation, it was occupied by Ulavar....the word Ulavar also seems to be a professional name meaning those performed ‘ulavu’ namely cultivation. The Neytal land was peopled by Paratavar whose major occupation was fishing....The Palai region was occupied by Maravar, Mallar and Malavar....they have formed the martial classes of ancient Tamilakam. (123-26)

Both K. K. Pillay and Hanumanthan are of the opinion that at no stage in the Sangam Age were the indigenous people considered inferior. They claim that in fact most of them had a very prosperous past. Hanumanthan notes that Parathavar who were later made into low caste by the caste Hindus enjoyed much privilege in the past and he calls them “Independent Tribes” who were defeated by the Chera and the Chola Kings. He also notes later that another Indigenous tribe Kuravas enjoyed much honoured place in the ancient Tamil society and “atleast some of the Kuravas were literate and were believed to possess some extraordinary powers such as bringing forth rain at their will for needy people” (128). Maravars and Kallars who were later considered as Criminal Tribes by the British, were “the most ancient
among the Tamils, who originated in this world with sword in hand” (128). Apart from these “major” castes, the castes which are formed as “sub-castes” according to K.K. Pillay have also enjoyed special privileges. Listing the sub-castes in *Purananuru* of Sangam Age, he writes “we hear of several sub-castes in *Purananuru*, viz., the *Mallan, Kuttan, Panan, Kadamban, Tudiyan, Paraiyan and Pulaiyan*” (Pillay 28). And as noted by M.C.Rajah in his *Oppressed Hindus* (1925), these people “represent the earliest Civilization of South India” and that “they were once a very great and powerful community that played a conspicuous part on the historical stage of India and had developed a complete civilization of their own’’(11).

Very much like the Aboriginal Australians, the Indigenous people of *Thamizhagam* led a life with sharing and cooperation. Ka. Subbiramaniyan in his *Sangakaalach Chamudaayam* (Society in the Period of Sangam) (1993) observes that various tribes of different *Thinai* of Sangam period led their life “living together and they shared their game. This life of living together was based on hunting and ancient forms of agriculture”. (47) He also insists that this way of life represent a highly civilized communal lifestyle involving respect, understanding and responsibility over the benefit of each other.

3. **Pre-Colonial Native Peoples of US and Canada:**

As rightly pointed out by Greg O’Brien, “the history of the Americas and American Indian history did not begin with the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Carribbean in 1492” and that “the ancestors of the people encountered by Columbus and later European explorers had lived in the Americas for up to 30,000 years” (1). While their history after 1492 was the story of victimhood after having been forced to suffer from the hands of the colonial regimes, their story of the pre-colonial period stands testimony to their glorious tradition and rich cultural development.
Richard Bowen claims that Archeologists and Geologists insist that there was once a land-bridge during the Ice Age connecting the present-day Alaska and Siberia, using which people traveled following their prey. They eventually established settlements in Alaska, Canada and the northwestern coast of US travelling all the way to Mexico and South America. And the tribes built relationships with their land so they themselves changed and became diverse in stature and different in languages. From the single aboriginal voice of the first settlers there came a myriad tongues, the Algonquian, the Siouan, the Iroquoian, the Athapascan, the Piman, the Shoshonean, Shahaptian, the Caddo, the Salishan and others. Distinct by way of life, by physicality, by language, they became a kaleidoscope of 500 nations. (Lewis, John E 5)

As a precursor to many of these Indigenous nations, the Mayan civilization of the Americas led a rich cultural life which lies completely beyond the understanding for the modern mind. In fact in many ways it was the Mayan civilization of the Americas that became a witness to the rich cultural heritage of the Indigenous peoples. Its main ceremonial center, Tikal includes six pyramids and seven temple palaces built over thousand years before. The Mayan priests and engineers developed a highly advanced measurement of time. The Aztec and Toltec civilizations, which developed after Mayan civilization, absorbed much of its influences. These advanced cultures later influenced the peoples of the Southwest and Mississippi River Valley areas of the US. The peace-loving Hohokam (the Vanished Ones) people lived in the South Western United States. They lived with a large irrigation system cultivating corns. The Anasazi people who built large structures which resemble the modern apartment complexes also lived during the same period. The famous Hopi, Tewa, Kere and Tano tribes of the contemporary period are the descendents of the Anasazi people.
As noted by Fyre Jean Graveline, “prior to colonization, Aboriginal systems of thought were incorporated into our daily lives. It was the dominant mode of consciousness. Patterned into our unconscious through stories, rituals and humour and enacted in everyday experiences, Aboriginality was common to all members…” (51). When Colombus discovered the ‘New World’, “Creeks were living in the present-day Alabama; Choctaw and Chickasaw in Mississippi; Seminoles in Florida; and Cherokee in Georgia and Tennessee.” (Bowen 29) Similarly the Ojibways, Sioux, Hurons and Crees were the major tribes living in the present-day Canada. All these people led a life that was cultured yet full of challenges. Courage to face many challenges day after day was an inevitable part of their everyday existence. Courage and valour became part of their stories and legends. Holly Quan notes in his Native Chiefs and Famous Metis (2009) of their courage especially of the Metis of the Canadian West:

The First Nations and Metis of the West traditionally honoured courage, Courage in battle when faced with fierce and relentless enemies. Courage to hunt buffalo, grizzlies, elk, eagles, bighorn sheep and more. Courage to face the intense heat of a summer drought or the bone-chilling cold of a prairie blizzard. Courage to seek visions through fasting and painful rites of passage, and courage to interpret and act upon those visions. (15)

With such courage, these Indigenous tribes often fought with other tribes over scores of reasons. Although these tribes were often at odds, the tribal warfare involved only small-scale rides. These wars lasted for generations until peace was made. George Copway notes on such wars between the Ojibways and Sioux in his Indian Life and Indian History (1860):

The quarrels have been kept alive, and the war-fires fanned by the songs of such nation. As soon as children were old enough to handle a bow and arrow representation of the enemy were made, and the youngsters taught to shoot
them, for exercise and practice. The old men narrated to the deeds of bravery and thus were they inspired with a desire to grow up, and when men, act like their fathers and scout the wide forests or each other. Even the mothers have taught their offspring before they leave their breast, to hate their enemies.(62)

The Indigenous people grew up listening to the memories cherished by their fathers and mothers. As recounted by Copway, these memories were often about their enmity with the other tribes. The rich legacy of one’s tribal memory however was not often recounted contrasting with the other tribes’. In fact, however enmity their memories perpetrated, their memory invariably sang in praise of the bravery and subtlety of the other tribes also. Despite the consistent indulgences in such warfare, these Indigenous people never failed to cherish peace and serene way of life. The peace deals and the resultant social transactions among many enemy tribes of the Indigenous peoples stand testimony to this. And among such deals and pacts, the ‘Confederacy of Five Nations and the Tree of Great Peace’ represents how much they value peace, cooperation and respect among the Indigenous nations.

The Story of Confederacy of Five Nations and the Tree of Great Peace:

The Iroquois are one of the major Indigenous tribes of North America. Surrounded by the Algonquian speakers, the Iroquois nations consist of the Senecas, Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas and Caygas. They were highly skilled farmers of corn. Women played a crucial role in the Iroquois nation where the kin relations and property were inherited through the mother and each clan was presided over by the Mother of the household who will be the oldest woman of the clan. The chiefs of the clan were also chosen by the council of Mothers.

These Iroquois nations were nevertheless very fierce and ferocious when it came to the dealings with their neighbours and were often fighting among each other over land, cattle, women and game. So fierce the battles were that the Iroquois nations once began to
threaten to annihilate each other in a cycle of revenge feuds. They were saved from their own
feuds by a Huron holy man named Deganawida during around the period of about the mid
15th Century. He had a vision in which he saw the Five Nations united under a Tree of Great
Peace. He arranged for a council of the Five Nations and informed of this great vision and
insisted on the importance of having peace among them. He then planted a white pine tree
and made the famous proclamation through the ‘Great Law’:

I am Dekanawidah, and with the Five Nations’ Confederate Lords I plant the
Tree of Great Peace…I name the tree the Tree of the Great Long Leaves.
Under the shade of this Tree of the Great Peace we spread the soft white
feather down of the globe thistle as seats for you…The Roots have spread
out from the Tree of the Great Peace, on to the north, one to the south and
one to the west. The name of these roots is The Great White Roots and their
nature is Peace and Strength (Lewis, John E 17).

With the planting of the Tree of Peace, the people forgot their old enmity and led a peaceful
life. True to the spirit of the Great Tree, the Confederacy of the Five Nation was continued
to be governed with the Peace lovers and the Confederacy went on from strength to strength.
Armed only with Peace, the Confederacy led a cultured way of life where prosperity thrived.

And the ‘Great Law’ that governed the League of Nations has many principles of the
modern day democracies. The Confederacy was governed by the rotiyanehrs who were
chosen from the Nation. Each individual member of the clan, regardless of the position or
gender had the voting right to choose the rotiyanehrs. These rotiyanehrs were chosen as
being the wisest, fairest, most altruistic of the clan’s men. They oversaw the League of
Nations’ progress keeping in mind the Great Law which prescribed them: “with endless
patience, they shall carry out their duty. Their firmness shall be tempered with a tenderness
for their people. Neither anger nor fury shall find lodging in their minds, and their words and actions shall be marked by calm deliberation” (21-22). It was with such calmness, tenderness and with endless patience that the League of Nations was ruled. And as decreed by the ‘Great Law’ that “if any man or any nation outside the Five Nations shall obey the laws of the Great Peace…they shall be welcomed to take shelter beneath the Tree of the Long Leaves” (20), the Great Law became very popular drawing interest on the League of Five Nations from across the boundaries. And as noted by the Mohawk Historian John Ojjiatekha Brant-Sero, “the story of the Tree of Great Peace was handed down for ages…from mothers to children” (16). The Tree of Great Peace became a symbol of the Indigenous Peoples’ preference of peace over war. The memories transmitted “from mothers to the children” sing in praise of the Great Tree. Along with the legend of the Great Tree that highlights the importance the Indigenous peoples gave to the idea of peace and cooperation, there are other forms of their legends that highlighted their Native Sensibility.

**Coyote and the Creation Accounts of the Pre-Colonial Native People of US and Canada:**

Among the Indigenous peoples of North America, Shamans the storytellers, and elders had been passing down their memories, traditions, beliefs, and mythology from generation to generation for thousands of years. What is significant about these tales of the Shamans is the fact that these tales are filled with characters from the worlds of humans and animal worlds and also that of the inanimate objects. Jean Fyre Grevline notes that:

The shamans who studied Mother Earth and her mysteries found that everything is made up of four elements: air, light, water and earth. Each aspect of creation, all plants, animals humans and other energy forms maintain their “shape” by a balance of these elements in their structures. Learning and teaching in the Traditional way embraces the mental, spiritual, emotional and
Thus all the characters make a personal account of the story narrated while getting equal prominence for their roles. And these characters also get transformed into other forms of life and thereby highlighting the close affinity of the Indigenous peoples with Nature. The different characters of these stories together represent in a significant way the uniqueness of the very essence of Native American lifestyle. Louise Halfe in the poem “Listen to the Bones” has narrated this significant Native Sensibility brought about in these tales through the lines:

I bring to you

these Voices I will not name. Voices

filled with bird calls, snorting buffalo,

kicking bears, mountain goats,

I do not recognize who speaks…

Listen to the bones. (Battiste, Mary ix)

It is with such voices the memories of the Native Americans were transmitted from one generation to the other. Giving equal prominence to the birds, buffaloes, bears, mountain goats as much as to men, women and children these stories sing of the significance of their Native Sensibility.

‘Coyote’ in the Native American Stories:

Coyote, the wolf is perhaps the most popular Creator figure in the Native American stories. As noted by Guy H.Cooper,
Coyote... represents both good and evil, humans and gods, and of course animals. He is unpredictable and ambivalent, a characteristic of all these beings. At the same time, however, by testing and pushing the limits of behaviour, he demonstrates and reinforces concepts of harmony and order (181).

Commenting on the significance of the ‘Coyote’, Patricia Ann Lynch observes that “the character of Coyote is the best known and the most widely appearing characters in the Native American mythology.” And she further observes: “Mischievous, deceitful and cunning, Coyote appears in many tales in which he tricks both animals and people…and as a Culture Hero Coyote is credited with bringing fire to humans, releasing buffalo into the world and slaying evil monsters” (28). Besides being a Trickster, Coyote also appears as an important character in the Creation Accounts and ceremonies of the Native Americans. He was the symbol of knowledge and wisdom and as noted by Yazzi, when “No one knew what to do; so they asked Coyote” (Yazzis 73). Cooper observes that,

Coyote is a figure who not only tests boundaries, but transcends boundaries. In myth he operates in the worlds of humans, animals and gods, in nature he operates in both human and animal worlds, taking food from both nature and human settlements. He is associated with First Man and yet lends sound advice to the Holy People, he is responsible in no small way for the current state of the world and has had a pervasive influence, through his deeds in myth, on the way the Navajos have led their lives. He has ensured the survival of the Navajo and made the world a balanced whole. (191)

Indeed Coyote stands testimony to the Native American insistence on harmony, peace and order in their way of life. And according to Cooper, as Creator Coyote aids in establishing that order, as Trickster, he tests and authenticates that order, as well as providing a means of
conceptualizing order and disorder, and, as a figure associated with evil and witchcraft, he violates that order. It has to be observed here that the modern writers like Thomas King have made effective use of the Coyote myth in their writings to portray the everyday existential dilemmas that loom before the Indigenous peoples. And along with the character of Coyote, Creation Accounts reveal the sensitive nature of the Indigenous peoples in relation to the world of Animals and Nature.

**Creation Accounts:**

Among the stories of the Native people of North America, the Creation Accounts- the legends about the origins of the Universe, Earth, heavenly bodies, human beings, animals and plants give us a deep insight on their culture and way of life. Unlike the case of the Aboriginals of Australia, some of these Creation Accounts of Native Americans begin with the Earth’s creation from a void. One of the major beliefs among these Indigenous peoples was their belief in the existence of a higher power above all the other spirit beings called ‘Creators’. This power or ‘Supreme Being’ was known by various names in different tribes: “Awonawilona- ‘the maker’ (Zuni)...Maheo (Cheyenne), Wakan Taka- ‘the Great Mystery’ (Lakota) and etc” (Lynch, Patricia Ann 30). It has to be noted here that many tribes had women creator characters too playing prominent role in their culture and tradition. Characters like Navajo- ‘the Changing Woman’ of Dineh, the ‘Standing Rain’, the daughter of ‘Evening Star’ who is the mother of the human race according to the Pawnee Creation Account, and the Arapaho Whirlwind Woman of Nayaanxatisei who created the world from a ball of mud highlight the kind of awe and respect the Indigenous people have for the women. These creations myths which give such prominence to women through their Goddesses also showcase the egalitarian societal structure of the Indigenous peoples.

Very much like the ‘Dreamtime’ Origin Myths of the Aboriginal Australians, the Creation Accounts of the Native Peoples of the North America too varied in its form and
content in relation to the geography and the peoples’ way of life along the different landscapes of the continent. Patricia Ann Lynch observes the variation in the themes of the Creation Accounts noting that there are several themes seen among the creation accounts. In accounts of a water-covered world, different beings bring up soil to make the Earth. In the Southwest, people traditionally emerged into the present world from one or more underworlds. In the Northwest accounts, people descended to the present world through a hole in the sky that is associated with the smoke hole of a Tipi. (29)

She also observes that there are five major elements in these Creation Accounts. These five major elements in the Creation Accounts highlights the Native American perception of life.

i. **Creator and Culture Heroes:**

   *Awonawilona*- “the Maker” of Zuni, *Esaugetuh Emissée* “Master of Breath” of Creek, *Gitche Manitou*—“the Great Spirit” of Algonquian, *Oranda* of Iroquois, *Unsen*—“Life Giver” or “In Charge of Life” of the Apache, *Akbaatatdia*—“The One Who Has Made Everything” of Crow *Es-Te Fas-Ta* “Gives Everything” of the Seminole and Creator Women Spirits as mentioned in the earlier pages were some of the prominent ‘Creators’ characters in the Creation Accounts of the Native Peoples of North America. In certain accounts, these spirits would produce the ‘Culture Heroes’ who would often be “the first people on Earth, frequently figure as creators who transform the landscape, bring Light and Fire, create human beings, and introduce agriculture.” (31) In many Creation Accounts Women were also portrayed as famous Culture Heroes. In a significant way, very much like the humans and spirits, the animals and birds were also noted as the Culture Heroes. Patricia Ann Lynch notes on this saying,
Fire was given to the Nez Perce by Beaver, to Jicarilla Apache by Fox, to the *Anishinabe* by Muskrat, and to the *Ute* by Wolf. For some Northwest Coast tribes, Bear was a culture hero who created fish, named rivers, taught skills to humans, and slew monsters...Raven brought light to the dark world, taught animals, created and changed parts of the world and named plants. (31)

This further highlights the kind of respect the Indigenous people had towards the animals. They saw many of the animals to be the manifestation of the Spirit that has created the world itself and worshipped them.

**ii. Co-Creators:**

In many Creation Accounts, two accounts are involved in the process of creation. Often these are the Warrior Twins, and in some case the Mother Earth and the Father Sky. In the *Paiute* Creation Account wolf created Coyote as a companion and the two paddled around the water-covered Earth in a Canoe. Getting tired of paddling, Wolf and Coyote poled dirt on top of the water until they created the land. Similarly, in the *Mandan* Creation Account the First Creator and Lone Man created the world together and they walked across the water that covered it. The significant aspect of all these ‘Co-Creator’ Creation Account is the idea of the inevitability of the idea of Duality. The Native world saw the process of Creation- just as their way of life- dynamic and circular. In such a view the Creator and the Co-Creator are part of the COMPLEMENTARY elements of the Duality, whereas the COMPETETIVE elements of the Binary opposites encompass the Western worldview.

**iii. Earth Diver:**

Another prominent Creation Account among the Native North Americans is the Earth Diver Accounts. In such accounts, various animals and birds would attempt to dive inside
the water covered Earth to retrieve mud or clay from which the world would be created. The diving animals would frequently include the beaver, duck, loon, muskrat, otter and turtle. For the Cherokee, the water beetle would succeed in bringing the mud. These Creation Accounts of Earth Diver too insist on the importance the Animals were given in the Native Sensibility. Each of these animals were considered totems in their respective clans.

iv. Emergence Account:

Among the Southwest of the Native Americans the idea of Emergence is a very prominent theme in their Creation Accounts. They saw life in the present world is an Emergence into the present world from a previous world. Emergence involved climbing up from one dying world into the next new born world. The move to another world was necessary in order to escape from conditions that made the preceding world uninhabitable. Achomas, Apaches, Hopis, Creeks, Navajo and Zuni people believed in the Emergence and Migration Accounts. These Emergence Accounts insist of the importance of leading a life that would care and respect Nature for their sustenance. The idea that they have to migrate into another world if they had to face the present world uninhabitable creates a close affinity towards the land they live in.

v. Re-creation:

In some of the Creation Accounts, the first world was destroyed by the Creator-usually by means of flood and had to be remade. According to the Inuits the first Earth came into existence when it fell from the sky, complete with people. These people ate dirt and were never able to die. When a great flood swept away all but a few people survived who later accepted death as an inevitable part of their lives. This idea of recreation as a part of life represents their rich understanding of the life itself.
The enigmatic and dynamic character of Coyote and the various Creation Accounts of these Indigenous peoples represent the significance of the richness of the memories they cherish. While the ‘Creator’ accounts and ‘Earth Diver’ accounts highlight the significance of role of animals in the Native American Sensibilities, ‘Co-Creator’ accounts signify the complementary attitude of the Indigenous world view. Similarly the ‘Emergence’ account insists on the importance of the role of the land for the Indigenous peoples. On a similar note, the ‘re-creation’ accounts of the Indigenous peoples showcases the extended rich philosophical worldview that insists on the inevitability of death that accompanies the presence of life. The creative energy and the dynamism involved in these stories also highlight the Indigenous world view which values the idea of wholeness, order and concord. As much as these their love for a peaceful life is exhibited in their accounts of Tree of Great Peace. And in such a world, as these stories suggest, voices of the animate and inanimate blend into harmony.

It was into the realms of the culturally rich world of the Indigenous peoples the invading communities made its rude intervention. It was into the world of the timelessness of the Aborigines of Australia the western colonial powers landed and branded them brutes having not been able to comprehend them. It was into the fertile ‘nations’ of the Native Americans where people, land, animals and plants were equally respected that Columbus and his followers spread smallpox and other diseases and further led them to a condition of persistent poverty. It was into the lands of the original inhabitants of Thamizhakam whose sensibilities were governed by the affinity they had towards the land they lived in, the outsiders barged in with their religious fanaticisms drawing them away from such sensibilities. And along with these outsiders came their rituals, customs, practices, religions, way of thinking and living forever tormenting their mode of life. And with this intervention the memory they cherished of their ancestors and of their affinity towards land and nature became seriously disrupted.
II- Colonial Encounters

The imperial legacies incorporated their ideological control over the colonized Indigenous peoples using a variety of means. They inflicted violence on the mind, the body, and the soul of the Indigenous peoples perpetuated by their religious sensibilities. Such violence was loathed with hatred based on ‘difference’ on the body as much as on the soul of the colonized Indigenous peoples. When violent means was not possible, they indulged in cunning means of deals and pacts using the law towards their advantage. This part of the chapter details the experiences of the Indigenous communities in the hands of the Colonial powers. Looking into the initial contact made by the invading cultures and the further developments that led to the disastrous state of the Indigenous peoples of Australia, US, Canada and Tamil Nadu, this part of the chapter will also detail the brutal nature of the colonial expansion.

1. “Discovery” of Australia and the Aboriginals:

Contrary to much of the established beliefs, Stuart MacIntyre makes a startling revelation on the supremacy of the Dreamtime stories over the western systems of historicizing. Contrasting the Dreamtime stories of the Aborigines and the chronological accounts of the settlers from Europe, Stuart MacIntyre notes that while “the stories of Dreaming tell of the beginning that are both specific and general (where) hypotheses and conjectures can provide broad approximations for the first human habitation…the story of the second (European) settlement is known in minutest particularity”. (16) Stuart Macintyre further notes that first crew set for the discovery of new lands that discovered Australia consisted of 1066 people who had sailed in eleven vessels to New South Wales from the Southern English naval town of Portsmouth…thirty-one died during the voyage. The survivors reached the north shore of Botany Bay on
18 January 1788…and British flag was hoisted as the commander, Captain Arthur Phillip, took formal possession of the new colony (16).

He also claims that documents like the journals of Arthur Phillip, other official instructions, dispatches, logs, diaries and letters of those who accompanied them lets one know of “the names of every person, their status and duties, the stores they brought with them and the livestock, plants and seeds even the books they brought” (16) and he further notes “we can plot the actions of the colonists with an amplitude of details” (16). As noted by Fyre Jean Graveline, the “Colonial administrators and missionaries everywhere were required to submit detailed reports about Native legal systems, land tenure rules, production, reproduction, socialization, spiritual practices and much more. (25). And that the “Europeans collected and used this information to meet their own ends, explaining and justifying the individual acts of conquest, of repression, of exploitation. All of it was right rational, and natural” (Blaut, James M 26).

Despite the popular account that the British had “discovered” Australia, it was the Dutch sailor Willem Janszoon who documented the existence of Australia for the first time in the year 1606. When Willem Janszoon set sail in the year 1595 in the ship “Little Dove”, his mission was to find whether New Guinea and the nearby lands had gold and other sailable commodities. When they landed in what is now called Australia, they called it the ‘New Holland’. Later when another Dutch sailor Jan Castenszoon set sail to ‘New Holland’, “offered financial incentives to his crew for the capture of Aboriginal people, and a number of them were taken back to Dutch headquarters” (Barbara, West A and Frances T.Murphy 33). The violence on the Aboriginal people which started in this fashion became rampant in various forms in the later days. When island of Australia remained elusive with its flora and fauna and the aboriginal people for those who produced the ‘knowledge’ on the continent, James
Cook, the pioneer sailor was assigned the task of producing documents on the land, animals and people of Australia. James Cook made his way to the east coast of Australia in 1770 and produced significant documents of “descriptions of the continent’s unfamiliar plant and animal life, as well as judgmental descriptions of Aboriginal life” (34-35) which later helped establishing the colonial powers over the island.

**Infliction of violence - on the body and the soul of the Australian Aboriginals:**

Commenting on the establishment of the European imperial control over Australia, Stuart MacIntyre notes that, “it required a substantial European effort to subdue the indigenous peoples of the regions of settlement, and no less an effort to justify their expropriation” (19). This ‘substantial European effort’ refers to a variety of violent means. Charles Darwin the famous scientist notes on this saying “wherever Europeans has trod, death seems to pursue the aboriginal…” (Moses, Dirk A 5). And when the Europeans were looting and killing the Aboriginals, the English writers like Charles Dilke wrote “it is their fate to be abolished; and they are already vanishing” (100) and on a similar note Anthony Trollope insisted in his infamous statement “(the Aboriginals) were rapidly dying out and it is hard to see any other fate could be expected for them” (214). While raids and brutal murders already resulted in the thinning of the Aboriginal population, the smallpox and other diseases spread by the settlers quickened the acts of “dying out”. Noel Butlin has noted on the series of epidemics starting from the smallpox of 1789 followed by 1829 to 1831 and again in 1860s along with the venereal diseases (also spread by the Europeans) to have claimed over a million lives. Referring to this brutality, Jon Kociumbas observes:

In Port Phillip, an Aboriginal population almost certainly underestimated at 11,000 to 15,000 people in 1834, had been reduced to less than 2,000 within a generation, while the white population boosted by gold rushes had leapt from 77,000 in 1851 to 540,000 within a decade. (89)
And all through the nineteenth century the Aboriginal population was considered by the western colonialists as “doomed race” that is to be soon completely wiped out of the earth. What is more disturbing is the obvious blinding of the fact that the reason behind the disappearance of the Aboriginal race was the Europeans themselves. The *raison d’être* was rather attributed to the Aborigines themselves. As noted by Russell McGregor, the rapid decline in the Aboriginal population was cunningly attributed to,

1. Their contact with the Asian peoples
2. Their culture, which according to the Europeans that was fragile
3. Their susceptibility of diseases
4. Their fondness of “vices of civilization” (313-14.)

And further to their own promiscuity. And by doing this the European settlers not only absolved themselves from their own sins and errors but also branded the Aboriginals with an uncivilized identity.

While the violence meted out on the body of the Aboriginals were wiping them out from their lands, the colonizers have already started claiming the lands from the Aboriginals wiping the land away from them. Two significant moves by the colonizers proved to be highly detrimental for the survival of the Australian Aboriginals. The law governed by the principle of *Terra Nullius* and the law that caused the Stolen Generation were very severe in the act of erasure of Native sensibility from the Aboriginal memory.

During 1870s all the fertile areas of Australia had been appropriated by the settlers and the Aboriginal communities were reduced to impoverished people living either on the periphery of European communities or on lands considered inappropriate for settlement. They made use of the laws established in the European continents to achieve this. *Terra Nullius* (a Latin
expression deriving from Roman law meaning ‘land belonging to no one’) was used to usurp the land belonged to the Australian Aboriginals. Proclamation of Governor Bourke on 10th October 1835 is historically important which implemented the doctrine of *Terra Nullius*. The principle of *Terra Nullius* was based on John Locke’s seventeenth century notion of property ownership. The law stated that the natives had no “investment in the soil” therefore they had no claim to it. The British documented this land as land belonging to no one, which endowed them with complete ownership and the right to consider the land as their own.

In the late 1890s, Aboriginal people were utilised as a “cheap labour pool, being employed as station hands or crewmen for fishing and pearling boats. Child labour, sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by non-Aboriginal men, disease, drunkenness and drug addiction led to the Queensland Government policy” (“Protocols for Consultation and Negotiation with Aboriginal People” 10) and this “practice of forced relocation of the majority of Aboriginal groups and families from their traditional lands onto foreign lands where government reserves and or church run missions were established” (10). Further, most of the “Aboriginal family groups were split up and sent to different reserves. Fantome Island off Palm Island is infamous for being a place of punishment where Aboriginal people who dared to ‘defy’ government authority were sent”(10). As the next level of the colonial policy, “during the 1950s, was assimilation which is based on a philosophy of making society and different cultural groups the ‘same’ as the dominant group, in this case Anglo-Saxon heritage.” (11)

Having driven most of the Aboriginals to the reserves which are mostly not suited for their way of life, the settlers caused further serious damage to the Aboriginal sensibility by forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families. Removing children from their families was official government policy in Australia even as late as 1969. The practice had begun in the earliest days of European settlement, when children were used as guides, servants
and farm labour. The first ‘native institution’ was started in the year 1814 at Parramatta to ‘civilize’ Aboriginal children. The Aborigines Protection Board was established to supervise the mass dislocation of Aboriginal people from their traditional lands onto reserves and stations. Aboriginal girls in particular were sent to homes established by the Board to be trained for domestic service. In 1909 the Aborigines Protection Act gave the Aborigines Protection Board legal authority to take Aboriginal children from their families. In 1915, an amendment to the Act gave the Board power to take away any child without parental consent and without a court order. Welfare boards, churches and various other organizations took part in this process. The process removed Aboriginal children from their families, left them first in institutions, and then with white families. These children were taken from aboriginal parents so they could be brought up ‘white’ and were instructed to snub their aboriginality.

Today these Aboriginal people are collectively known as the ‘Stolen Generations’. The Aboriginal children who were stolen from their homes to be brought up by the whites faced different levels of problems. Though they were taken-in by the whites, they were still treated more like indentured slaves. The girl children faced much sexual violence. The forced removal of the children from their native lifestyle proved to be a serious setback for the Aboriginal communities. The identity crisis resulted from this cruel and inhuman practice is portrayed by Lorraine McGee-Sippel in her poem, “Belonging where?” published in the website stolengenerationstestimonies.com. Lorraine McGee-Sippel writes,

Caught in an abyss

Belonging where?

Thousands of children

Heartache despair.

Stolen, separated
Leaving mothers behind
Lost to our Culture, Music, Dance and Art.
Lost to Ourselves – our Families - our Hearts.

The existential dilemma caused by the trauma of the forced removal is expressed in these lines of beauty and precision. Writing further on the psychological impact on the children who were forcefully stolen from the Aboriginal homes, Lorrain McGee-Sippel writes,

As a child – wondering
What did I do wrong?
Who the hell am I?
A feeling so strong
The taunts of a childhood
All a whirl
‘Half-caste, half-caste
a little black girl.’

The loss of the Aboriginal self, a sense of abandonment caused by the assimilation policies of the Australian Governments and the predicament of the confused modern Aboriginal life are altogether best portrayed in her final stanza,

Too black to be white.
Too white to be black.
Caught in the middle
Belonging nowhere.
2. Loss of the Land is Loss of Lives: Massacre of Native American Lives and Lifestyle:

As discussed in the first part of this chapter, the Native Peoples of Americas had a rich culture which was based on the principles of humility, humaneness and most of all a high level of respect and regards for Nature. The land, the animals, the birds and their Gods were not different or distinguishable elements for the Native Americans and that they all were part of one sacred cycle. For the Native Americans, Nature was their harbinger of life, and the land is the source and symbol of their identity. They went to the extent of sacrificing their lives to protect the land from the warring neighboring tribes. Their life and lifestyle changed forever with the arrival of the invading European civilization.

Upon landing on the Bahamas on 12 October 1492, Christopher Columbus found these “Indios” primitive yet charming. Jon E. Lewis in his *The Mammoth Bok of Native Americans* (2004) quotes Christopher Columbus’ letter to the King and the Queen of Spain citing Columbus’ on opinion on the rich tradition and sweet nature of the *Arawaks* (Native American tribe lived in the Bahamas during the period of the arrival the European Colonizers):

So tractable, so peaceable, are these people that I swear to your Majesties there is not in the world a better nation. They love their neighbours as themselves, and their discourse is ever sweet and gentle, and accompanied with a smile; and though that it is true that they are naked, yet their manners are decorous and praiseworthy (39).

Christopher Columbus, while praising the Native *Arawaks* for their cultural and personal decorum, proved his ruthlessness as an invading Conquistador and “proceeded to claim their land in the name of Spain, forced their conversion to Christianity and then enslave them. On his first voyage, Columbus took ten *Arawaks* home as slaves. All but two died” (39). The conquest of the new found land was validated by Christopher Columbus in two folds. The
first was to insist on the importance of converting the Indigenous savages into Christians. The next fold was to convince the king that the new found lands of Americas had abundant amount of gold and other riches, in one of his logs, Colombus has entered,

Your Highness must resolve to make them Christians. I believe that if this effort commences, in a short time a multitude of peoples will be converted to our Holy Fait, and Spain will acquire great domains and riches and all of their villages. Beyond doubt there is a very great amount of gold in this country…Also there are precious stones and pearls, and an infinite quantity of spices (Hill, Gordon 12)

Gord Hill notes on his later exploits among the Native Americans: “Colombus would make four voyages in all… His voyages around the Caribbean brought to him to what is now Trinidad, Panama, Jamaica, Venezuela, Dominica and several other islands-capturing Native peoples for slavery and extorting gold” (13). The violence brought upon the Native peoples was very severe. The invading conquistadors found no remorse whatsoever in inflicting any kind of ruthless violence on the body and the soul of the Natives. Precisely because their violence was validated by the necessity to spread Christianity as much to civilize the Native savages who were quite conveniently perceived only as people with primitive barbarity and beastliness, the invading forces indulged in different kinds of callous assaults. As noted by David Day,

Plundering, killing, and destroying the conquistadors were untroubled by any moral quibbles, confident that they were bringing the light of Christianity into the moral darkness of the Mexica’s savage world. Mounted on their horses, and armed with their swords and their cannons, the Spanish were merciless in their own savagery. (Day, David 76)
Later in the year 1539, remembering such brutal act of savage onslaughts of the invading Europeans, Acuera, the Timucua chief, an Native American leader made the following famous statement,

…your accursed race have, in years past, poisoned our peaceful shores. They have taught me what you are. What is your employment? To wander about like vagabonds from land to land, to rob the poor, to betray the confiding, to murder in cold blood the defenseless…

(Ed. Blaisdell, Bob 3)

When the Spanish invading forces involved themselves in such ruthless colonizing endeavours, soon the French and the British also came along to possess the lands of the Native Americans. While the Spanish forced the Natives to work as slaves and in many ways disturbed the Native American lifestyle, the British and the French used trade initially to control the Natives.

While the physical violence on the body and the soul of the Native Americans caused by the invading cultures proved to be seriously detrimental, the diseases spread by the invaders proved to be the worst kind of punishment for the Indigenous people. Ann F. Ramenofsky, Alicia K. Wilbur and Anne C. Stone in their article “Native American Disease History: Past, Present and Future Directions” comment on the role of the disease spread by the Colonizers among the Native Americans: “Old World populations introduced infectious diseases to Native Americans beginning with the Columbian voyages of AD 1492… Native Americans had no immunological memory for Old World infectious agents; upon exposure, the risks of infection, morbidity, and mortality were high” (241). The deadly diseases brought to the Americas by Europeans included smallpox, bubonic plague, measles, influenza, whooping cough, cholera, malaria, yellow fever and diphtheria. Greg O’Brien notes “Death rates reached 100 percent in some cases. Within a century of contact, most Indian groups that had encountered Europeans
lost 70 to 80 percent of their population” (66). This serious decline in the population caused by the deadly diseases and wars resulted in a complete annihilation of many Native American tribes.

Even when the US gained a state of autonomy having fought against the British colonial forces, the Native Americans still faced the same plight. In fact, the Native Americans preferred the British colonial power over the forces of General George Washington. This preference further caused other serious repercussions. As noted by Richard Bowen,

During the American Revolution, most of the Iroquois sided with the British. Hundreds joined British soldiers and marched against American settlements in western New York and Pennsylvania. In retaliation, General George Washington sent an army against the Iroquois. With the destruction of 40 villages and most of their crops, it was the end of the Iroquois nation. (33)

Thus the forces of George Washington ended the legacy of the great Native American tribe of Iroquis that reigned with power and might for several centuries. When the United States government began to gain control over the entire country of US, the Native Americans faced further serious problems. Very much like the case of the Australian Aboriginals, various tribes of Native America were forced to leave their homes and were driven away to other settlements far removed from their lands.

The 1783 peace treaty that ended the American Revolutionary war created a vast new American nation. The United States used cunning methods of negotiations to drive away the Menominees, Illinois, Potawatomis, Ojibwas, Sauks, Ottawas and Foxes tribes from these areas. One such treaty of negotiation that required the Seminole tribes removed from Florida to the Indian Territory was Treaty of Payne’s Landing of 1832. Osceola, a famous Native
American warrior led guerrilla forces for several years against the invaders. He claims, like various other treaties, the Treat of Payne’s Landing also was made by dishonest means and that their own Native American leaders were deceived. He said,

The white people got some of our chiefs to sign a paper to give our lands to them, but our chiefs did not do as we told them to do; they done wrong; we must do it right. The agent tells us we must go away from the lands which we live on- our homes, and the graves of our Fathers, and go over the big river among the bad Indians. (Ed. Blaisdell, Bob 89)

Later, with the complete control over the country, the US government passed several laws that empower the US government to drive away the Native Americans from their lands.

In the 1830s President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which empowered the US government to forcibly remove Native Americans from their lands. Thousands of Cherokee died on the long march from their homes in Georgia and Tennessee to the lands where the government wanted them to live in Oklahoma. The route became known as the Trail of Tears. (Bowen, Richard 31)

The inhuman treatment faced by the Natives, especially their forced removal from the lands was a death knell to their Native sensibilities. Having already embraced the invading cultures, the Native American lifestyle of living a life of humaneness and humility and respect for nature was already under threat, and now, having removed from their lands, many Native American tribes faced extinction. The Native Americans did retaliate against the forces of the whites but all those attempts were thwarted ruthlessly. As proudly proclaimed by Colonel John Chivington, who said “I have come to kill Indians, and believe that it is right and honourable to use any means under God’s heaven to kill Indians” (Ed. Lewis, John E 176), the whites used cunning
and brutal means to thwart the revolts killing number of Native Americans and thereby giving a serious blow to the Native American legacy preventing them forever from showing any sign of rejuvenation of their great cultural legacy.

3. Aryan Invasion of the Tamil Indigenous Memory:

The settlers from the European countries used violence as much as a variety of cunning means and pacts to conquer the lands of the Indigenous peoples of Australia and North American continent. The extent of such invasion of the lands of the Indigenous peoples took place during the period of fourteenth to seventeenth century A.D. while their invasion took place as late as only during the fourteenth century onwards, their predecessors- the Aryan invaders invaded the lands of the Indigenous Peoples of India as early as 1500 B.C over number of wars. Thirusirapuram A. Perumal Pillai in his Āthi Dravidar Varalaru(The History of Adi-Dravida) (1922) made a study on the possible date of the Aryan invasion. Citing Williams’ Historians’ History of the World, he notes that it could be before 1000 A. D., but he notes that according to the Tamil Studies, it could be before 1500 A. D.

Those Aryans undermined the Indigenous cultures and with cunning means successfully clouded the Indigenous Peoples memory and thereby their history and ultimately obfuscated their identity. The rich cultural lifestyle that has close affinity towards nature as mentioned in the previous part of the chapter was seriously hurt by the invading forces. The different modes that made possible such eclipsing of the Indigenous identity are discussed in detail in the third chapter.

Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, one of the foremost and significant scholars among the Indigenous Peoples of India was intensely focused on the emancipation of the oppressed Indigenous Peoples. His contributions to the study of the eclipsed identity of the Indigenous peoples of India are highly influential in the modern era. His scholarship in multifarious fields (Law,
Economics, History, Religion, Anthropology, Sociology, Literature and Vedic Literature) proves to be highly influential for many scholars in their respective fields. Perhaps his distinction lies in the fact that he mastered his subjects and remained committed and compassionate to the unfortunate classes of the nation. He strongly believed that the role played by Hinduism, especially the Brahmanas in the oppression of the Indigenous Peoples was very severe and inhuman. He was very certain that bringing to limelight the original and hidden identity and history of the Indigenous Peoples is a vital process in their emancipatory process.

His works Annihilation of Caste (1936), Who were the Shudras? How they came to be the Fourth Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society? (1946) and The Untouchables, Who were They? and Why They became Untouchables? (1948) (collected and published under the title Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches) prove to be very helpful to understand his ideas on the Indigenous people of India. He is of the opinion that the nation now called India was once inhabited by the aboriginal people like Dasyus, Dasas, Nagas and Dravidas. In the work Who were the Shudras? he quotes various vedic hymns to prove this point, and one particular verse that he quotes from Shantiparvam of the Mahabaratha, Adhyaya 65 (Verse 23) “in all the Varnas and in all the Ashramas, one finds the existence of Dasyus” (104) stands testimony to his ideas on the Indigenous people of India. He also claims that the Dasas and Dasyus were not at all “primitive”.

However, Ambedkar claims the popular conception- ‘the defeated Indigenous people of India were the Shudras-- the last of the hierarchical Varna System’, unacceptable and declares in his Who were the Shudras? that “the Dasas and Dasyus were the same as the Shudras is a pure figment of imagination” (106). Explaining the same he asserts that,

The names Dasas and Dasyus completely disappear from the later Vedic literature. It means they were completely absorbed by the Vedic Aryan, the
early Vedic literature is very silent about them. But it is quite different with the Shudras. The early Vedic literature is very silent about them. But later Vedic literature is full of them. This shows that the Shudras were different from the Dasas and Dasyus. (106)

Contrasting the identity of the Dasas and Dasyus with the Aryans, W.W. Hunter in his monumental piece of work, *The Indian Empire: People, History and Products* (1886) claims that Dasas and Dasyus are the aborigines of India and “the struggle (between the aborigines and the Aryans) is commemorated by the two names which the victors gave to the early tribes, namely, the Dasyus or ‘enemies’ and the Dasas or ‘slaves’” (53).

Rev. Robert Caldwell’s opinion about the Indigenous people of Tamilakam resonate the same idea. Rev. Robert Caldwell’s text *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* (1875) proves to be very important for linguists, and for its scholarly details regarding the aboriginal people of South India, it is of much interest to the historians and researchers of various other fields also. When Ambedkar refused to accept the idea that the Indigenous people of India were the Shudras, Caldwell’s Editors used the term “Tamil Shudras” for the Indigenous people of Tamilakam. And Caldwell himself claims that “the aboriginal non-Aryan inhabitants of India seem to have been subdued, and transferred from Dasyus and Mlechchas into Sudras, by slow degrees” (117) again later in the text he notes “the primitive inhabitants were transferred from Dasyus, Nishadas and Mlechchas, into Sudras” (717).

Ambedkar claims that the Nagas of North and Dravidians of South are one and the same and insists that they were the original inhabitants of the country. He quotes Mr. Dikshitar’s article “South India in the Ramayana” on the Nagas as one of the “original inhabitants of the country”,


The Nagas, another tribe-semi divine in character, with their totems as serpent, spread throughout India, from Taksasila in the North-West to Assam in the North-East and to Ceylon and South India in the South. At one time they must have been powerful. Contemporaneous with the Yakwas or perhaps subsequent to their fall as a political entity, the Nagas rose to prominence in South India...in the Tamil classics of the early centuries after Christ, we hear frequent references to Naganadu…. (296)

Ambedkar claims that Tamil was the native language of the Nagas of all over the country. He further asserts that “the Nagas and Dravidas are the one and the same people” and “they are only two different names for the same people. Nagas was a racial or cultural name and Dravida was their linguistic name” (300). Commenting on the lives of Nagas, Kosambi a great scholar writes in his book, The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India an Historical Outline (1977), “Nag"s were in some way a very respectable people, not demons nor a low caste” (93). And later he again notes “‘Naga’ became a generic term of their forest aborigines, not necessarily connected or interrelated, who had a cobra (Naga) totem, or worshipped it as so many Indian aborigines (and not only aborigines) still do” (93). It has to be noted here that Gilbert Slater in his work The Dravidian Elements in Indian Culture (1922) has made an extensive study on the identity of the Nagas and relates the role of the Nagas and the Aryans, saying Lord Krishna of the whom the Aryans worshipped himself was a Naga- an aborigine. The scholarly writings of Iyothee Thassar further elaborate how the Invading cultures assimilated and appropriated the traits of the Indigenous peoples and obfuscated the aboriginal memory. His project of recovering the Indigenous memory is discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

The colonial oppression has in countless ways devastated the Indigenous life and lifestyle. Across time and boundaries, the colonial power has indulged in different means to
control the land, the life, the history, the identity and the sensibilities of the Natives peoples. The colonial projects has led to serious repercussions in the Indigenous people even after the independence, in some cases the colonial expressions continues to persist through varied forms of oppressions.

### III. Aftermaths of Colonialism

The colonial policies have resulted in different forms of oppressions for the Indigenous peoples. Because of the severity of the impact of the colonialism, the identity of the Indigenous people itself has unfortunately become dependent upon the different kinds of oppressions they had to endure. Commenting on different faces of this crude reality, in his “Being Indigenous in Today’s World”, Johnson Mallh Ole Kaunga laments:

Being Indigenous means being a victim of,

1. Displacement from ancestral land in the name of development, national security/militarization, wildlife conservation and environmental protection;

2. Dispossession of territorial resources, heritage and cultural resources and Indigenous technical knowledge;

3. Domination by mainstream thinking, formal education and administrative systems at the expense of Indigenous knowledge;

4. Oppression and subjugation by mainstream communities

5. Social exclusion, which is institutionalized in decision-making processes…

(8-9)
Very much like the previous parts of the chapter, this part of the chapter too will rely on the stories of the Indigenous peoples and not on academic texts. These songs and stories are literary documents of the Indigenous peoples who give an account of their tainted condition that has come about as the aftermath of the colonialism. Unlike the previous parts of the chapter, this part of the chapter focuses rather on the problems faced by the Indigenous people as collective victims, and less as people belonging to any individual geographic location. The tribulations of displacement, dispossession, domination, oppression, subjugation and social exclusion has become an universal phenomenon synonymous to the life condition of the Indigenous peoples across the world, which in turn necessitates this approach.

‘Displacement’ and the Indigenous Peoples:

In his “Study of the Problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations”, J. M. Cobo, United Nations Special Rapporteur has commented on the sacred relationship between the Indigenous peoples and the land they live in. He says,

It is essential to know and understand the deeply spiritual special relationship between Indigenous peoples and their land as basic to their existence as such and to all their beliefs, customs, traditions and culture...

Their land is not a commodity which can be acquired, but a material element to be enjoyed freely. (Cobo, Jose R. Martinez 11).

In his comment on the sacred relationship between the land and the Native peoples, Cobo also has quite implicitly complained against the western and colonial attitude of displacing the Indigenous Peoples from their lands. But the dispossession and displacement of the Indigenous peoples happens for centuries through various forms in different parts of the world. While the colonial projects snatched the lands away from the Indigenous peoples and legalized their actions with pacts, laws and deals during the colonial regimes, the Indigenous
peoples in the contemporary scenario face a similar threat even from the elected democratic governments across the world. This attitude of displacing the Indigenous peoples from their land takes form in different forms and means. In the words of Carlos Yescas Angeles Trujano, “the displacement of indigenous peoples through human activities has resulted from development projects, industrial environmental destruction, armed conflict, and governmental policies” (27). The Adivasis of India, the Jumma peoples of Bangladesh, Mee, Topo, Taja and Mai of Indonesia, along with the millions of other Indigenous peoples across the world face this serious threat of forced displacement, and thereby a total extinction from the face of the earth. This forced displacement of the Indigenous peoples “arises from the predatory actions of governments, business and warlords looking to seize lands rich in mineral and oil deposits” (30).

These predatory actions of the respective country’s governments are seriously discriminative in nature. The robbing of the land from the Indigenous people leaves them with serious existential anxiety resulting in a deep psychological apprehension.

This troubled psyche of a displaced Aboriginal and his anxiety over his displaced self is quite clearly narrated in the poem ‘Displaced’ by Rachel Davidge. Published in www.creativespirits.info, the poem pictures the loneliness, pathos, anxiety and a deep set existential quest about the future of an Indigenous man in these following lines,

   Sitting amidst the setting sun,
   his dark skin is wrinkled and worn,
   a reflection of his soul,
   where to go treading on now foreign land?
   Where to find peace now,
   along these roads?
The Indigenous man, whose worn and wrinkled, old, dark skin that reflects his worn and wrinkled, old, dark soul stands for the worn and wrinkled, old dark skinned displaced Indigenous peoples across the world. The question that plunges him deeper into despair, “where to go treading on now foreign land?” is the same existential question that leaves many an Indigenous tribe baffled about their future. Writing further on the psychological impact of the forced displacement, Rachel Davidge notes,

who will understand now,

spirits losing place,

not knowing where to go,

he feels the need to

hide his face.

With the loss of their Native sensibility symbolized in their spirits, the Indigenous peoples do not know what to do or where to go next. Arising out of this existential dilemma and a deep set psychological trauma is a serious sense of shame and disgust about one’s own identity that forces him to “hide his face”. The forced displacement, the discriminatory attitude of the government, and the self-interested corporate sectors have led the life of the millions of the Indigenous peoples under peril, furthermore, they have made them face their own rich identity and cultural legacy as the something that is weighed down with shame and suspicion.

The displaced Indigenous peoples across the world in the modern context find the elected democratic governments as but extension of the colonial atrocities. For most Indigenous peoples, the present global condition offers not much of a difference from what their fore fathers experienced. The displaced Indigenous people who are forced to settle for whatever the government offers, find the “developmental measures” offensive and realize
them to be something that ridicules their native sensibility. In the current scenario, as noted by Russell Means, an Oglala Sioux tribesman, the Indigenous people “…are people who live in the belly of the monster. The monster being U.S.A. Every country in the Western Hemisphere follows the lead of the monster” (Ed. Blaisdell, Bob 214). The displaced Indigenous peoples find their respective country’s elected governments as monsters that have swallowed them. The Native writings suggest that the mainstream culture that has ostracized and displaced the Native ‘savage’ cultures for centuries is also trying hard to gulp down them inside with its principles of appropriation and assimilation.

‘Dispossession’ and the Indigenous Peoples:

The displaced Indigenous people were not only dispossessed of their land but also many other things which they valued. They were dispossessed of their homes, families, their livelihood based on their cattle, their religious sentiments, their cultural legacy, their ritual lifestyle and in total they were dispossessed of their Native sensibility and thereby even their Indigenous identity. By dispossessing the Indigenous people of their land, the invading forces have dispossessed them of all these things. Marilyn Dumont a Cree woman wrote in her poem “Not Just a Platform for My Dance” narrating her predicament over the loss of land and the painful condition the Indigenous people had to endure caused by the dispossession. She writes,

this land is not
just a place to set my house my car my fence

this land is not
just a plot to bury my dead my seed
this land is
my tongue  my eyes  my mouth
this headstrong grass and relenting willow
these flat-footed fields and applauding leaves
these frank winds and electric sky

are my prayer
they are my medicine
and they become my song

this land is not
just a platform for my dance

(Ed. Moses, Daniel David and Terry Goldie 390)

this powerful poem sings of how the Colonial powers that settled across the Indigenous lands deprived the Indigenous peoples of their land, their hunting grounds, water resources, and how they destroyed the sacred sites and other spiritually significant places. The land for her is not just a land to mark a fence- a subtle sarcastic remark on the European attitude towards land ownership. The land for her is her tongue i.e. the rhetoric she would use for her description of the spirits. The land for her is her eyes i.e. the source of her perception of the world. And the land for her is her mouth i.e. her language itself. She considers grass, willows, fields, leaves, wind and sky as her comrades which are in turn part of her sacred spiritual cycle of a prayer, which eventually would cure her from all forms of illness. This land, which is the source of all these sacred things, is robbed from the Indigenous peoples.

The effects of the dispossession among the Indigenous people were profound. In the case of ‘Stolen Generation’, as the Indigenous children lost family ties and were cut off from their culture and language, the possibility of the Indigenous lineage itself has come under jeopardy in Australia. Writing on this wicked side of the dispossession and its serious impact on the status of the Native sensibility among the Indigenous peoples of Canada, Jeannette C.Armstrong, an Okanagan, in her, “The Disempowement of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment Through Their Writing”, complains:
Our people were not given choices. Our children, for generations, were seized from our communities and homes and placed in indoctrination camps until our language, our religion, our custom, our values, and our societal structures almost disappeared. (Ed. Moses, Daniel David and Terry Goldie 239)

The indoctrination of the foreign ideologies into the minds of the Native peoples was initially made possible by the systematic dispossession of the language, culture, values, customs, religion and societal structures. This dispossession of the Native peoples and the resulting indoctrination thereof has left the Indigenous peoples sans a ‘valid’ identity. Rita Joe, a Mic Mac in her poem “I Lost My Talk” has narrated her experience of being dispossessed of her Native identity. She wrote,

I lost my talk
The talk you took away.
When I was a little girl
At Shubenacadie school.
Your snatched it away (112)

The rich knowledge transmitted by her people in the forms of songs, rituals, tales, legends and instructions about the birds, animals, land, flowers and trees and their richness and beauty is forever lost due to the indoctrination. The dispossession of her ‘talk’ is a serious blow to the Native Sensibility and that she has become almost like her colonial master, who on his own part wants her to be like him. Rita Joe writes,

I speak like you
I think like you
I create like you
The scrambled ballad, about my word. (112)

The result of the principles of indoctrination is that the Native American child has learnt only to speak, think and even create only like the alien invaders. However, with whatever she has
learnt from the colonizers, she still wants to talk only about her word, the word that was forcefully snatched from her. Thus, besides pointing out the colonial overpowering and its devastating impact on the Native sensibility, the resistance to comply with the demands of the colonial master is also narrated and that too with unique subtlety in lines like these written by the Indigenous writers.

‘Domination’ of the Indigenous Peoples:

Poka Laenni in the famous essay “Process of Decolonization” traces the following as the five stages of colonization of the Indigenous peoples,

i. Denial and Withdrawal: denial of the very existence of a culture of any merit among the Indigenous people.


iii. Denigration/Belittlement/Insult: denigrating the Indigenous culture as illegitimate, evil and uncultured.

iv. Surface Accommodation/Tokenism: the remnants of colonial onslaught are given surface accommodation and “are tolerated as an exhibition of the colonial regime’s sense of leniency to the continuing ignorance of the Natives”.

v. Transformation/Exploitation: the traditional cultures that refuses to die are transformed into the dominating colonial society. (Ed. Battiste, Mary 150-51)

Across the world these different stages of the colonial domination of the Indigenous peoples took shape and form with different degrees. However, the continuing colonial domination over the Indigenous peoples by the dominant sections appears similar in magnitude. In the
words of Linda Tuhiway Smith, “They came, they saw, they named, they claimed” (80) and they continue to dominate the Indigenous peoples in every possible manner.

While the colonial oppressive forces continue to dominate the Native traditions in different spheres, their domination in the field of academia is alarming. As cited by Merata Mita “We have a history of people putting Maori under a microscope in the same way a scientist looks at an insect. The ones doing the looking are giving themselves the power to define” (30). And it is with this power to define, the dominant western sections ascribe negative identities to the Indigenous peoples.

Commenting on this attempt of colonial domination, Grand Chief Edward John in his “Indigenous Peoples-Discovery or Conquest?” (www.filmannex.com) notes:

Those schools were premised on this idea that indigenous peoples were inferior to the general population, their cultures and civilizations were inferior, their languages were not to be spoken, children had to be taken from their families and communities and placed in these institutions to begin the gradual civilization and Christianisation of our peoples. As if our history and our cultures and our languages were not important.

Most advancement in the field of science and technology, which the world celebrate are seen by the Indigenous peoples as tools for domination. The displacement caused due to mining enterprises; pollution caused by urban, rural and forest industries; radiation caused by the telecommunication advances- all these scientific progresses are seriously detrimental for the Indigenous peoples and they consider these to be the symbol of domination. The current popular trend of globalization is regarded as the manifestation of the colonial domination. According to Linda Tuhiway Smith, “The globalization of knowledge, and Western culture constantly reaffirms the West’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge,
the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of the ‘civilized’ universal knowledge” (63). The “civilized universal knowledge” of the West, because of its supposed positional superiority continues to dominate the Native knowledges. Writing sarcastically on the patronizing nature of the supposed positional superiority which is premised on the “inferior” condition of the Indigenous peoples, Lionel Fogarty writes in his poem “Mr Professor” (poetrylibrary.edu.au):

…Thank you Mr Professor
for those kind gestures
but I’m doing my thing.
Our guns are alive
That’s the reality
alive
like lava
and your intellectual
and academic criticisms
have been your industry,
out of our oppression.

As narrated by Lionel Fogarty, an Australian Aboriginal, while for the dominant Western systems the knowledge about the Indigenous peoples are products produced as in an industry, the real knowledge of the Indigenous peoples comes out of the oppression they endure.

**Oppression and Subjugation and the Indigenous Peoples:**

Like any other marginalized section, the Indigenous people too had to face different forms of oppressions. One could understand the nature of these different forms of oppressions by relating them to the conceptual understanding of the term as suggested by Iris Young. For
Iris Young, a combination of five faces reflects the totality of the cruel nature of the oppression. In the article “Five Faces of Oppression”, Young cites the following as those five faces,

1. Exploitation
2. Marginalization
3. Powerlessness
4. Cultural Imperialism
5. Violence (40-65)

The Indigenous peoples across the world face the brunt of these five forms of oppressions in their everyday life. The severity of these five different faces of oppressions in their life has become a global phenomenon that it has become a common binding factor for all the Indigenous peoples across the world. While compromises on the rights of the Indigenous peoples regarding their land, and other resources marks the stage of ‘exploitation’, the tendency of the dominant sections to push them away towards the periphery, and thereby reducing any chance of their revival reflects the next form of oppression - the ‘Marginalisation’. As Jean Fyre Graveline laments,

The colonial period of European consciousness was characterized by objectification- an ideology that revered the domination by European humans of all life forms. Through this lens, all the beautiful and bounteous gifts of Earth Mother became only objects for exploitation (26).

With their lands being robbed from them, with their history and identity being branded as inauthentic, and with their Native sensibility left under jeopardy, they stand completely ‘Powerless’ and weak before the authoritative forces of the Government and Corporate sectors. These powerless Indigenous peoples are then indoctrinated with the colonial ideologies
assisted by the principles of assimilation and acculturation, and their rich cultural legacy is wiped off from their memory resulting in ‘Cultural Imperialism’. The ‘Cultural Imperialism’, ‘Marginalization’, a complete state of ‘Powerlessness’ and ‘Exploitation’ are all made possible by a systematic and organized ‘Violence’ inflicted on the mind, body and the soul of the Indigenous peoples. The Indigenous peoples therefore face all these five different faces of ‘Oppression’, making them one of the most seriously affected victims of oppression.

By devalidating the history, identity and the Native Sensibility, the invading cultures undermined their cultural integrity and authenticity. This enabled them in institutionalizing their oppressive approaches towards the Native peoples. Legitimized by sacred texts, religious doctrines and legal documents, the invading dominant sections took it as their primary duty to oppress and subjugate the Indigenous peoples. This oppression took place in terms of body, mind and soul. The invading dominant class oppresses the body of the Indigenous people in treating them as slaves and cheap labourers, and also in starving them in a serious impoverished state. The indoctrination of the colonial ideologies through assimilation and acculturation and the negative stereotyping as savages, thieves and liars oppresses the mind of the Indigenous peoples. The inhuman treatment of the lands and the natural elements which the Native peoples consider sacred offends their soul. This oppression of the body, mind and the soul of the Indigenous peoples take place in the worst possible variety in India in the form of caste oppressions. Accusing such oppressive attitude of the dominant sections, L.S. Rokade in the poem “To be or Not to be Born” gives voice to the victims of such inhuman oppressive attitudes. Written as a voice of an unborn child in the womb addressing its mother, the powerful poem charges the entire civilization that has oppressed its mother.

Writing on the selective and discriminatory attitude of the dominant sections, the poem reads,
I, still in you womb, was wondering
Do I want to be born-
Do I want to be born at all
In this land? (Ed. Dangle, Arjun 3)

The child exhibits this deep set question filled with pain and anxiety because, “where all paths razed horizonwards/ but to me was barred” (3). The oppressive discriminatory attitude that prohibits a life for the child symbolizes the cruelty of the dominant section in its entirety. Writing further, the poet blames on the entire civilization for its inhuman treatment:

Mother, this is your land
Flowing with water.
Rivers break their banks,
Lakes brim over,
And you, one of the human race
Must shed blood
Struggle and strike
For a palmful of water.
I spit on this great civilization… (4)

While the whole of the nation is filled with abundance of water, the child’s mother alone is forced to bleed, struggle and strike for a mere palmful of water. This is the crude reality of the oppressed Indigenous peoples of India, the Dalits. Though they have got educated and shown tremendous progress in the contemporary scenario, the condition of the Dalits in different parts of India are still deplorable. The oppression and subjugation these people endured for centuries have robbed their voices from them and so they have led for centuries what Yusoja calls a “Mute Existence”. Yusoja says, “…unbalanced already,/the life of the Dalits crushed/ by tyrant stones of grinding inequality” (77). The grinding inequality is validated by the religious doctrines of the dominant sections. The assimilated Dalits in the modern context have become victims of these oppressive regimes of inhuman practices.
‘Social Exclusion’ of the Indigenous Peoples:

The previously mentioned forms of oppressions predominantly rely on the physical overpowering of the Indigenous peoples by the dominant sections, resulting in physical subjugation of the Indigenous peoples. This physical subjugation thereof harms the psyche of the Indigenous peoples in a serious manner. This injury is left forever as a scar in their everyday existence even questioning their very being. Whereas, the oppression of the Indigenous peoples through ‘Social Exclusion’ is first and foremost a mental oppression. The deliberate and systematic denial of space and the justifying claims for the denial which ridicules the very essence of being Indigenous leaves many Native peoples with cultural inferiority and existential insecurity. Deliberate and systematic exclusion to the periphery of an entire Indigenous community by unjust stereotyping with the terms of, ‘savage’, ‘ignorant’, ‘culturally inferior’ and ‘morally week’ aims at a complete annihilation of their existence.

Of all the different forms of oppressions against the Indigenous peoples across the world, caste system in India proves to be the worst possible oppression that uses ‘Social Exclusion’ as its fundamental principle of subjugation. Morally codified and religiously legalized, the caste system in India is deliberate in its purpose and systematic in its approach, that it persists for centuries in excluding the Indigenous peoples of India, not only socially, but also in the spheres of economy, culture and politics.

Lakshmi Narasu, in his Study of Caste (1922), remarks that caste system has basically three characteristics, namely, 1. Mutual repulsion, 2. Hierarchical organization and 3. Hereditary specialization. Though the nature of caste system cannot be explained just in these three principles, these ideas would help one to understand the nature of caste system.

Just like race, gender or any other forms of oppression, caste system in India is also built around the fundamental principle of ‘difference’. However, it is singular from other
forms of oppression in the fact that, in India there are innumerable numbers of castes, each repelling the other. Even while different castes repelling against each other; one set of caste would consider themselves hierarchically above the other citing some religious scriptures and ancient moral codes like Manusmriti. This perpetual ‘mutual repulsion’ and codified ‘hierarchical organization’ affects the Dalits, the Indigenous peoples of India the most. Armed by the above mentioned ancient moral codes and religious scriptures, the dominant sections stereotypes the Indigenous peoples of India as ‘permanently polluted’ and assigns them menial tasks of cleaning and thereby prohibiting them from any other trades other than what is assigned to them. This assigning of perpetual impure task is aimed to maintain the supposed ‘purity’ of the dominant sections. Furthermore, they are denied of education, economic independence or any measures of development, forcing them with a state of servitude which is thrust upon their posterity. Bhau Panchabhai is dejected over these systematic and deliberate modes of social exclusion and asks in his poem, “How?”; “How do we taste milk in this town/ Where trees are planted of venom? (Ed. Dangle, Arjun 71). For Bhau, the venomous seeds of caste oppression is already planted, and this tree will live forever as it only spreads other trees. This perpetual venom of a tree prohibits them from having anything from the “town”. The “town” here symbolizes a typical Indian town that is loathed with the oppressive mentality of caste system. The socially excluded Bhau Panchabhai ironically asks “How am I to join such a company?” when all he has known about the town people is that they are faithless murderers and looters. He further asks,

How can we share a drink of friendship?
How can I know this town as my own
where workmen are slaughtered daily?
How do I burn to light the path
at this turn
where hutments are set on fire? (71)
This perpetual wonder of innumerable ‘how’s left in the minds of the Indigenous peoples unanswerable, is the result of the systematic and deliberate social annihilation. As mentioned earlier, because of the serious nature of ‘oppression’ and ‘domination’ caused by displacement and dislocation, which the Indigenous Peoples had to endure ad infinitum, the very state of being oppressed and subjugated have unfortunately become synonymous to the very identity of the Indigenous peoples across the world.

Nevertheless, as rightly pointed out by Luther Standing Bear in his “What the Indian Means to America”, a chapter of his classic work *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933),

All the years of calling the Indian a savage has never made him one; all the denial of his virtues has never taken from him; and the very resistance he has made to save the things inalienably his has been his saving strength – that with will stand him in need when justice does make its belated appearance and he undertakes rehabilitation. (Lewis E Jon Ed. 351)

The Indigenous people, despite the persistent attempts of denigration, dislocation, dispossession and eradication of their social and cultural identity have successfully resisted such brutal assaults and have withstood all these attacks and as suggested by Luther Standing Bear, they have continued to stand tall against colonial onslaughts. The strength and vigor that helped them sustain is from the inspirations they drew from their history which they find in their stories.