Chapter-2
Disadvantaged by Colour
Chapter-2

Disadvantaged by Colour:

*Benang: From the Heart; Green Grass, Running Water,*

*Medicine River*

*and*

*Truth and Bright Water*

A very elemental understanding of racism would be stratification of society based on races. It means possessing a belief by one group of people that the other group is different and/or inferior. Racism takes birth when a particular group of people develops a strong assumption of one’s superiority over that of the other. The sense of superiority arises from some economical, political, social, intellectual advantage one group has over the other, and thus, considers itself to be in a position to dominate and dictate terms. The pride in their superiority leads them to mete out unfair and unequal laws and treatment towards the so called inferior group. Discrimination, segregation, denial of rights, scapegoating, marginalization, prejudiced attitudes become ways of displaying dislike for the other races. The belief in one’s racial supremacy is a self conceived, over riding view made by under rating and devaluing the other race. The devaluing of people based on racial lines is not a recent phenomenon.

It was seen that “from the fifteenth century onwards, religiously inspired views on the barbarity and inferiority of the indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia and America were used to legitimize invasion, genocide, slavery and exploitation” (qtd. in Castles and Ellie Vasta 21). In Europe the racial superiority was prevalent during the middle ages and renaissance. It was during the middle- ages that the concept of blue blood was used as a euphemism for being white by the catholic Spaniards to use against the moors that had invaded and conquered the Iberian Peninsula. The Renaissance was an age which promoted exploration and discovery in the intellectual and literal sense. Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492
and come into contact with people of the New World and it was believed that the American Indians were considered to be soulless people, thus below humanity.

Scientific techniques were once used to establish racial supremacy through the study of the size of human skulls. This technique is no longer in use. Samuel Morton, an eighteenth century American scientist arrived at a very biased conclusion after the study of the size of human skulls. His conclusion was that the large skull size of the Caucasian gave them ascendancy above the rest. Eighteenth century naturalist like Johann Blumenbach, though opposed to slavery created hierarchical pyramid placing the Caucasians at the top. It was also said that he paved the path regarding claims about White supremacy and superiority.

Swedish biologist Charles Linnaeus too laid down the foundation of racial classification. The way in which he had described the four main categories of ‘Genus Homosapiens’ is as follows:

1. ‘Americanus’ – Native American males were supposedly red; had black hair and sparse beard; were stubborn; prone to anger; “free”, and governed by traditions. Thus, this form of ‘Homosapien’s was definitely inferior and uncivilized.

2. ‘Asiaticus’ – The male Asian was said to be yellowish, melancholy, endowed with black hair and brown eyes... severe conceited and stingy. He is governed by opinion. “Thus like the aforementioned type of ‘Homosapiens’, the ‘Asiaticus’ could only be a mediocre prototype”.

3. ‘Africanus’ – The male of this subset, according to Linnaeus, could be recognized by his skin, tone, tall structure and curly hair. This kind was apparently cunning, passive and inattentive and ruled by impulse...

4. ‘Europeans’ – The males of this subset, were supposedly “changeable, clever and inventive. He puts on tight clothing. He is governed by laws... . Therefore, being the most civilized of the Homosapiens; the Europeans were obviously the most superior type in Charles Linnaeus’ view. (Hossain)
Since the Europeans were ‘changeable, clever and inventive’ and possessing the traits of being civilized domination by the superior race was believed to be desirable for the progress of the ‘definitely inferior and uncivilized’.

Based on the industrial, military technology, economic, political advancement, Darwin’s theory of survival of the fittest was used to promote the idea that the European race was fit to rule over the ones who were a dying race. This theory was mostly used to justify colonization. The Whites were a part of the ever changing industrial society. Economic institutions, trade and commerce were becoming more prominent and gaining importance and power. Darwin’s theories in his books The Origin of Species (1859) and The Descent of Man (1871) were used to present Europeans as a superior race. In his book The Descent of Man, Darwin had “held blacks and Australian Aboriginals to be equal to gorillas and then inferred that these would be done away with by the “civilized races” in time” (evolutiondeceit.com).

The biological division of race based on physical distinctions has become obsolete. This notion was preferred during the time of early European imperial domination. Race in the present is considered more of a social construct done with the view of subjugating and marginalizing people. Race is socially constructed to categorize and create differences among people. Differences are created based on customs, values, language, religion, origin and so on. When attempts are not made to narrow down the differences between the groups it leads to division and social discrimination. Division of races based on biological differences has been discredited. Racism in the present is not concerned with physical features and colour of the skin yet prejudices related to these factors are still prevalent. Racism thus, can be explained as an economic, social or political power, and generally has the purpose of legitimating exploitation or exclusion of the group so defined. The dominant group constructs ideologies of inherent difference and inferiority of the dominated groups. The power of the dominant group is sustained by developing structures (such as laws, policies and administrative practices) that exclude or discriminate against the dominated group. (Castles 31)
Racism can be also expressed through social, political and economic institutions when it is under the control of the dominant group of people. It is expressed both directly, explicably, overtly as well as covertly through actions, speech gestures, etc. As Stephen Castles points out in his article “The racisms of globalization” racism can be mild or can be violent. Racial abuse can be directed toward the dominated group verbally or even in the written form. It may be used to intimidate as well as insult by the dominant race. He says that racial discrimination is executed by an individual, group or institution which not only curbs the freedom of the individual but also keeps him/her in fear of being physically or mentally harmed.

Institutional racism is expressed through political and social institutions. It takes place when the organizations, institutions managed by the dominant group use policies and practices within the institutions, which directly or indirectly discriminate and create an environment of disadvantage for other racial groups. Institutional racism is manifested through social, political, economic and educational policies which affect the mental, social and psychological development as well as the life style of the suppressed group.

At the societal level racism is revealed by promoting the cultural differences and presented as lacking and deficient than that of the superior race. For instance, “the coloured races and the Jews were described as outstanding examples of races with purely destructive and imitative capacities and thus unfit for cultural work” (Seligman and Alwin Johnson 37). This form of racial discrimination where the suppressed group is presented as culturally inferior is manifested through educational institutions, art, literature, music and religion which are all common forms of cultural transmission. For instance, the oral literature of the ‘First Nations’ and Aboriginal Australians was considered insignificant, primitive by the Whites and relegated to a secondary position.

At the economic level racial discrimination is practiced by preventing the suppressed race from better employment opportunities, right to form trade unions and prevent from acquiring well paid positions. The gulf between the two groups is widened by the unequal working opportunities and wages. On the other hand, the superiority of the dominant group is heightened and strengthened by the provision of better work, better pay and housing conditions.
Racism at the judiciary level is manifested through unequal and unfair dispersion of justice. Most of the times prominent positions of the judiciary are occupied by the members of the dominant group that lead to justice being meted out unfairly.

Prejudices enacted through the institutions at the societal, economic and judiciary level subtly legitimizes racism and fosters unequal relationships. Despite the message propounded by the Bible that all men are born equal racism has become an evil difficult to erase.

Despite Canada and Australia being populated by the Indigenous people, the Whites chose to ignore their existence especially in Australia. The “English did not “see” the [Native], neither did they “see” the Aborigines. All they saw was the countryside, the land. The people were invisible, which is another form of racism” (Berg 47-48). When they did accept the presence of the Indigenous people the Whites discovered a traditional society entirely different to theirs. Differences were noticed in physical attributes too. Distinctions were made and divisions created based on biological, economic, social and cultural differences. The colonizers considered themselves to be technologically advanced and past the hunting and gathering stage. They had progressed from being pastoral, agricultural to industrial. They looked upon the Indigenous people of Canada and Australia as being primitive. The colonizers considered themselves as harbingers of higher civilization to the New World. They assumed the superior position of a ruling race and made their presence “appear to be a factor of moral and intellectual superiority and of political capacity” (Seligman and Alwin Johnson 36). The Whites prided [on] a superior morality and culture. One way of doing this was by seeing people in possession of wanted land as being uncivilized, savages even animals. They speculated on the place of the [Indigenous people] in creation and arrived at a consensus that they occupied the bottom most rung on the ladder of humanity, along with the various primitive peoples of Africa and Americas. (Narogin 7-8)
The colonizers displayed their power to subdue and control the Indigenous population with the use of superior weapons. This display of power to gain control over the dominant group has been interpreted as use of “bullying tactics” by Rosemary van den Berg in her book *Nyoongar People of Australia: Perspective on Racism and Multiculturalism*. The use of “bullying tactics” goes way back to the colonial era, she says and is prevalent in the present times too. Once the colonizers used the “bullying tactics” to establish themselves, they used other forms of differential and preferential practices. This belief in their superiority led them to assume an intrusive control over lives of the Indigenous people. Along with colonization began prejudices, marginalization and discrimination. Racism went hand in hand with colonization.

The colonizers held strong to their belief of racial superiority undermining the Indigenous people to the position of the inferior ‘other’. Their relationship with the Indigenous people was not considered symbiotic by the Whites. They were considered to be the White man’s burden. As a result the Whites framed and implemented certain policies and acts to unease the burden. These acts and policies turned out to be subtle expression of racial discrimination. The paternalistic, protection and assimilation policies had disastrous effect upon the ‘First Nations’ and Aboriginal Australians. Most of the policies that were formulated were to subjugate the Indigenous population. The racial overtones in the paternalistic and protection policies cannot be overlooked. Under these policies, the natives were herded off to the missions and reserves. The aim of which was not to protect or provide parental instructions but to segregate and isolate them from the mainstream. Therefore, it cannot be denied that that the colonizers practiced racism of exclusion to keep the Indigenous population at bay.

Paternalism was introduced with the intention of infantilising the adult Indigenous people and keeping them in a position of immaturity, servility and dependence. By infantilising the Indigenous people, the Whites could place the natives in an inferior position making them vulnerable to subjugation, oppression and exclusion. Paternalism paved the way for racism of inferiorisation and exploitation. It was the colonizers self-proclaimed superiority which made him assume the role of a parent and reduce the natives to the position of an ‘adult child’. The paternalistic behavior, therefore, denied the Indigenous people “the status of mature citizens living
in adult countries...lacking coherent speech, and thus unable to represent themselves and take charge of their countries” (Acheraiou 70). The Whites with their racist policies firmly established ways of excluding and marginalizing the natives of Canada and Australia. Racism in Canada and Australia began with colonization. It began through the imposition of colonial institutions and implementation of colonial acts, rules, laws and policies.

Racial discrimination in Australia has been directed not only towards the Indigenous people but also towards the immigrant population. The white policy adopted by Australia in 1901 was specially directed towards preventing non-Europeans immigrants from entering Australia. It was trying to restrict immigration so that the Whites could maintain racial purity in the continent. The policy practiced racial exclusion especially on non-Europeans to bleach Australia white.

Racial intolerance, segregation and discrimination towards the immigrants have also been a part of Canada’s history. During the early 1800s Africans came to Canada, in the 1800s the Chinese laboured to build railways. Both of these communities have experienced racial discrimination in personal and institutional level. Attempts were made to limit Chinese immigrants by levying head tax. Japanese Canadians too suffered racial intolerance as they were relocated and detained. In 1914 Indians were prevented from entering Canada only to be shipped back home to India. Both these countries have practiced open unconcealed racial expulsion and carefully chosen racial immigration.

With the use of varied policies, biological and cultural assimilation, the Whites were unable to accomplish their so called civilizing mission. The Indigenous people of Canada and Australia have managed to survive the various covert and overt acts of racism. For the ‘First Nations’ and Aboriginal Australians the legacy of colonization is about racism practiced by the Whites and how the experience of being disadvantaged has been internalized by generations over the years. Racism is an ongoing process. The Indigenous people feel that racial discrimination has subtly and unconsciously been handed down to their next generations by the dominant group. Even though the descendant may declare that he/she is not racist but the way the average white person participates in racism in broad terms is by enjoying the gains that have come from a society
built on dispossession of Indigenous people and by enjoying the economic and political power that comes to them by virtue of their skin colour. By accepting that power as their birth right, members of the dominant culture enjoy the benefit of what their racist forefathers left for them, even if they do not use that power to take personal advantage of others. (Reconciliation 108)

In *Benang: From The Heart*, Kim Scott very tactfully blends fact with fiction. It is a semi-autobiographical filled with references to history. The narrative is interspersed with historical documents, correspondences between A.O. Neville, the Chief Protector of the Aborigines and the Superintendent of Carrolup Native Settlement. The local history notes do not turn the book into an exclusively historical novel. History and fiction have been very interestingly synthesized.

In his attempt to write history from the records of his grandfather, Ernest Solomon Scat, Harley discovers the way the legislation has worked to subdue, suppress and racially discriminate the Aboriginals. References are made to acts, policies, rules and laws which socially excluded, culturally destroyed the Aboriginals and suppressed the rights and freedom of movement of these people.

Through the character of Ernest Solomon Scat, Kim Scott highlights the breeding out of color propounded by the policy of assimilation. As the ‘first white man born’, Harley is in search of his Aboriginal identity which has been denied to him. He makes a journey with his uncles, Jack Chatalong and Will Coolman to ascertain his aboriginality and how physical and social absorption has distanced many like him from their Aboriginal roots.

In the novel, there is a smooth mingling of the past and the present. The past becomes crucial for the understanding and acceptance of the present condition of the Aboriginals. He examines how the policy of assimilation and several acts in the past has shaped and affected the self – identity of the full bloods and half-castes in the present.

In *Benang: From the Heart*, Kim Scott shows how most of the policies adopted by the colonizers worked towards the near extinction of the Indigenous people. For instance, the whole scheme of biological and social absorption as
favoured by A.O. Neville was racist. It was encouraged to wipe out all native traits –
physical, social and cultural so that the Aboriginals could be absorbed into the White
society. Mr. James Segal, a Travelling Inspector of Aborigines also expresses a
similar opinion to Ernest Solomon in the novel. “There seems a clear choice, … .Let
them multiply in wretched camps, let rations cost more, let them be useless and
untaught, keep them out of sight; or absorb them into our population. Absorption, he
said, it’s possible. Assimilation” (Scott 48). The policy of assimilation was the most
effective policy used to make the Indigenous people become extinct and to maintain
racial purity of the Whites.

The Whites considered the Aboriginals to be “at the very bottom of the scale
of humanity” (Cowlishaw 17). It was this belief in their racial supremacy which made
them ignore the presence of Indigenous people in the continent. Captain Arthur Philip
who landed with the first fleet of convicts declared Australia to be a Terra Nullis – an
empty land. The inability to comprehend the complex civilization and culture of the
Indigenous Australian people made the Whites adopt an attitude of indifference and
apathy towards them. When the colonizers did acknowledged the presence of the
Indigenous people it was with the intention to civilize and uplift them.

Believing in the theory of Great Chain of Being in which the Whites have
ranked themselves highest among the races of mankind, they felt that in Australia it
was their duty to “uplift a despised race” (Scott 29). The Whites propagated the belief
that the intention behind the various policies and acts were not to control or suppress
the Aboriginals- they were all introduced to protect, uplift and civilize the Indigenous
people. The truth was just the opposite of what was being propagated by the Whites.
The settlers “measured themselves against these original inhabitants, and
consequently wanted them pushed further down. Controlled” (119-120). More than
protecting and civilizing the Aboriginals, the acts and policies have worked towards
the creation of a White nation in Australia. Various religious, scientific and cultural
beliefs were brought forward to prove the inferiority of the Indigenous people. The
modes adopted by the colonizers in Australia to uplift the Aboriginals constantly
reminded them of being inferior to the colonizers For instance, the policy of
assimilation was racist in its intention because it aimed towards forced assimilation of
the half- castes into the White society by breeding out the colour. The policy was a
constant reminder that the Indigenous socio-economic and cultural life style was not
compatible to that of the Whites. Therefore, the assimilation policy was applied to change the entire way of life of the Aboriginals. In the present “assimilation is racist in the sense that it hierarchises cultures, and legitimates their destruction as a precondition for equality” (Castles 26).

A.O. Neville’s policy of “Cutting of the worst”…… [seeking] to eliminate the “degeneracy” and feeblemindedness of the biologically inferior Aborigines” (Robertson 4) was introduced almost at the same time when the United States Supreme Court “upheld eugenics based forcible sterilization of “degenerates” (i.e. of the poor and especially of poor blacks)” (4). A similar mention of sterilization scheme is evident in the novel. According to the Whites, some of the half- castes would be biologically and socially assimilated thus eliminating the chances of inheriting the feeblemindedness of the biologically inferior Aborigines. However, the problem of the ever increasing half-castes also had to be solved. Since the half- castes were “as numerous as rabbits” (Scott 76) the suggestion was to sterilize and prevent them from further breeding. “…I should suggest sterilizing them and prevent them breeding….” (76). Assimilation and sterilizations were measures adopted to eliminate the Indigenous population. The Whites believed that the full blood Aboriginals were a dying race, the part Aboriginal would be assimilated and the sterilization of the Indigenous women would end the Aboriginal race totally. Therefore, it can be said that racism of extermination/elimination was used by the Whites to create a fair Australian nation.

In *Benang: From the Heart*, Kim Scott through his character Harley exposes and explores the breeding out of colour favoured by the colonizers. The progressive constant breeding between the half-caste, quadroon and octoroon would lead to the birth of the ‘first white man’. The ‘first white man born’ would bear no physical characteristics of his Aboriginal ancestry. If the Whites could proliferate Australia with the ‘first white man’ / ‘woman’, it would turn into a White nation showing no indication that there were ever Aboriginals in Australia. The selective interbreeding would not only lead towards racial improvement but racial elimination altogether. Ernest Solomon Scat’s experiment in eugenics was a subtle form of extermination of the Aboriginals. “‘It’s another sort of murdering. What the law was doing. And helping people do. Killing Nyoongars really, making ‘em white, …’” (339-340).
When violence, disease, subjugation, oppression and dispossession failed to eliminate Aboriginals, assimilation through miscegenation was endorsed for the extermination of the original inhabitants leaving no trace that they ever existed. This would on the other hand strengthen the position of the settler community. The empowerment of one race by the complete absence of the other is mentioned by the writer himself. “The power of one community is increased by the feebleness of the other; or better still, the complete absence of an indigenous community…” (209).

Harley’s grandfather, Ernest Solomon Scat supports biological assimilation to the extent of carrying out his own experiment in eugenics. Ernest Solomon arrives rather late to Australia and loses the privilege of being one of those hero pioneers who have overcome obstacles and brought the hostile country and its people under the White rule. Burning inside him is a desire to be a pioneer of some kind. “For Ernest, it was a rationalism of his desire. It was a challenge. It was as if he- a little too late to be a pioneer, and not really cut out to tame the land –could still play a role in taming a people into submission” (34). Inspired by A.O. Neville he takes upon the task of “breeding out” the half- castes. Breeding out colour is considered to be a solution to the half- caste problem. The task he undertakes will help to create the ‘first white man’ and “uplift and elevate these people to [their] own plane” (13).

The breeding experiment undertaken by him is carefully documented and recorded. He carefully notes the dilution and adulteration of Aboriginal blood with photographs of his son, Tommy Scott and assessments like “Octoroon grandson (Mother quarter caste [No2] father Scottish). Freckles on the face are the only trace of colour apparent” (28). Progressive breeding would make the half - castes disappear and their progeny would be assimilated into the White society therefore, leaving no trace of Indigenous population.

The whole scheme of miscegenation was not only based on the intention of breeding out colour but also encouraged “selective separation from antecedents” (30). Biological absorption was followed by social absorption in which the part Aboriginals were segregated and brain washed into forgetting and denying their family, culture and heritage. “The repetition of the boarding school process and careful breeding….” (28) would finally make them fit enough to merge into the White population.
Ernest Solomon creates the ‘first white man born’ with the help of the process of selective breeding and diluting the Aboriginal blood. Harley himself claims that he is a product of his grandfather’s experiment. “He is the product of a long and considered process which his grandfather has brought to conclusion” (30). The socio-cultural assimilation of Harley is begun by bringing him to “a gentlemen’s boarding house” owned by his grandfather (17). The intention of the colonizers was to turn Australia into a White nation which could be termed as racist. The discrimination of the Indigenous people based on the differences in their values, language, culture, physical appearance, spirituality and so on were manifestation of racism. Rejection of the Aboriginals to the extent of eliminating them physically and socio culturally to make Australia white was racist. It was operated through the assimilation policy which encouraged breeding out of colour.

Kim Scott reveals how significant to the practice of miscegenation was the use and abuse of half-caste children, especially girls. “The young half-blood maiden is a pleasant, placid complacent person as a rule, while the quadroon girl is often striking attractive with her oftentimes auburn hair, rosy freckled colouring and good figure, or maybe blue eyes and fair hair…” (401). Such women would be appropriate for interbreeding and diluting the Aboriginal strain. It was in the missions, the residential school and foster homes where part Aboriginal girls/women were groomed to adopt the ways of the White women. In order to breed out the colour the half-caste women had to be elevated to the level of the White man. Some Whites did not want inferior type of half-caste women interbreeding with their men which would result in deterioration of their race. As a preventive measure some administrators suggested sterilization of half-caste women. Since the half castes were considered to have inherited some of the White traits as well as diluted the Aboriginal blood in them, it was thought better to remove them from their maternal milieu. Therefore, it was important for the half-caste women to be “encouraged to live white, think white and to marry if possible into white race, as failing that with each other” (Jacobs 70).

Ernest Solomon Scat feels the need to be selective about choosing an appropriate partner in order to carry out his experiments in miscegenation. He marries Kathleen, a half-caste after great consideration and constant reassurance from her self-claimed foster father, Sergeant Hall. They assure him that Kathleen is fair enough to
be his wife. Ernest Solomon himself observes that Kathleen “wore shoes, and her faded dress was clean. Her hair shone... he could smell the soap and fresh water” (75). In her he sees the semblance of a White woman. Sergeant Hall and his wife are proud that they have transformed Kathleen into a “fair... civilized and well mannered woman” just the right one for Ernest Solomon to begin his experiment with (77).

Indigenous women [specially the half-castes] became subjects to be taught, while white women and men assumed the role of the knowing subject... . Indigenous women reveal that they were treated as though they had no knowledge, feelings or emotional attachments. They were perceived as being a Tabula rasa a blank slate to be written on. (Moreton-Robinson 22)

This is also evident in the novel where Ernest Solomon uses the minds and bodies of the women as if they are a blank slate. While their bodies, will be used to create the ‘first white man’ their brains will be taught to reject Aboriginal connections socially and culturally in order to remove all racial impurities in the forthcoming generations. Sergeant Hall and Daniel discuss breeding in the presence of Ernest Solomon. “These two hairy angels wished to seize people in their long arms and haul them to their own level. Their minds held flickering images of canvas...their noble selves sat at the top and no, they did not see themselves as leering...” (Scott 77). The Aboriginal half-caste female is the empty canvas which can be used for progressive breeding and dilution of Aboriginal characteristics. Dissatisfied with Kathleen, Ernest Solomon takes another fair, part Aboriginal woman, Topsy. With her almost golden hair, small fine bones, her elegance of speaking and conducting herself, she excites him. To the lustful scientist Ernest Solomon, she is “almost a new species” (135). By using Topsy, Ernest Solomon is all geared up to create a fair nation and remove all racial impurity. With the aid of “progressive miscegenation [he is ready] to produce generations with white skin, light enough to permit their “absorption into the white society” (Robertson 7). He is proud of his experiments when a son with hazel eyes in born followed by a grandson with “dark blue veins... beneath his creamy skin and his nipples and lips... sharply defined” (Scott 14).
The colonizers wished to turn Australia into a White nation by assimilating the half -castes. However, they were also afflicted with the fear of regression in the mixed blood people. Regression could make them resort to their Aboriginal ways despite all precautions taken. This fear of regression is exposed in the novel by Kim Scott. To be able to uplift the racially inferior a few steps up the ladder made Ernest feel “deliciously superior” (135). However, the biggest obstacle for the Whites who were trying to “uplift a despised race” (29) was the fear of regression. The reappearance of Aboriginal traits and characteristics even when raised to the level of the White was a perpetual concern. The colonizers feared atavism. “In social sciences, atavism is a cultural tendency – for example, people in Modern era reverting to the ways of thinking and acting of a former time” (Atavism ). The fact that the part Aboriginal even after socio-cultural absorption may resort to their Aboriginal ways worried the Whites.

Even with Ernest Solomon Scat the fear of atavism that his son Tommy had shown and his grandson Harley might show, makes him keep a strict control over Harley. His son Tommy had proved to be a failure even though he had married a White woman. “Your father?” Em snorted, “You’re nothing like him. He’s some sort of throwback, all right. I made you mine” (Scott 437). Ernest Solomon had erred in the upbringing of his son Tommy. He had allowed his son to associate with his Aboriginal relatives. He had not practiced “selective separation from antecedents” at the appropriate time, which he plans to do so with Harley (30). Thus, he brings him to his boarding house for gentlemen. Harley on the other hand does not want his grandfather’s plans to succeed. He likes to see himself as a failed experiment in biological assimilation conducted by Ernest Solomon Scat. Harley dislikes his grandfather for his “curiosity about colour, about the remnants of it, the dilution of it. His interest in genetics. [Harley mainly hates] this sort of detached interest; that of the scientist, with his trained mind and keen desire...” (415). Ernest Solomon, as Harley discovers is more of a scientist than a loving and concerned grandfather. Harley thus, expresses a desire to connect to the Aboriginal heritage which he has been denied because his Grandfather who is his link to the White heritage treats him more like a guinea pig for experimentation than a human being with feelings. “Raised to carry on one heritage, and ignore another, I found myself wishing to reverse that
Though he cannot reverse the experiment, he does show a desire to become a throwback.

The term throwback is used often in the novel. Throwback is a term “Eugenicists used to refer to mixed race progeny who ‘reverted’ evolutionally to the ‘worst’ traits (...) of their forebears” (Jacobs 71).

Sergeant Hall advises Ernest Solomon when the latter arrives to Gebalup that though the Whites like Mustles, Dones, Stars and he have tamed and pacified the Indigenous population one still has to keep a watch over them. The part Aboriginals possess the tendency to “regress and revert to less civilized ways” (Scott 74). When Tommy is getting married, his White father-in-law comforts his wife’s apprehensions regarding their daughter’s marriage to a half-caste, a ‘first white man’. He pacifies her fear and anxiety by telling her that “they don’t have throwback anymore” (433).

In order to avoid atavism and throwbacks the proper socio-cultural conditioning of the part Aboriginals was considered essential. While the full blood Aboriginals were reckoned to possess child like nature which

needed to be looked after in the missions, the paternal station owner may take care of the rest ... [on the other hand] the half castes unable to help themselves must be bred into the European population and assume adult status as the child blood is diluted.

(Narogin 11)

It was necessary to dilute the child blood to the very last drop and along with strict socio-cultural conditioning the problem of throwbacks would be reduced and eventually eliminated.

In the novel Kim Scott shows how the half-caste donned what Fanon said the ‘white man’s mask’. The Indigenous people of Australia especially the mixed blood were forced into believing that the Whites were superior. Attempts were made to brainwash the Indigenous population to relate whiteness to western civility and blackness to alien barbarism” and that was why the part Aboriginals were trained to be Whites (Tatz 75). A strong sense of inferiority aroused in the half-caste, the desire for acceptance made them willingly/unwillingly adopt the culture, and values of the White people. These values of the Whites were deeply internalized by the people who...
were made to feel inferior by the colonizers. It is this sense of inferiority and uselessness, a belief perpetuated by the Whites which makes the Aboriginals “Destroy memory of a culture, destroy evidence of a distinctive people, bury memory deep in shame” and adopt mannerism of the White people- like Kathleen, Sandy Mason Two and others do in the novel (Scott 448).

It is not only the part Aboriginals who wish to wear the white mask but even the White men married to full blood or half caste women are obsessed with the colour white. Every White man proclaims and declares his son to be the ‘first white man born’. Sandy Mason One married to a full blood woman, Fanny believes his son Sandy Mason Two to be the ‘first white man born’. His son-in-law, Daniel Coolman believes the same regarding his son Will. Will is nurtured to believe and behave like a White man. He walks “proudly, cautiously, like one provisionally uplifted, whose toes barely gripped the earth” (168). He does not realize that his status is that of a provisional not permanent White man. For them the chance of survival becomes better if they adopt the colonizer’s way. Ernst Solomon also declares his son and grandson to be the ‘first white man born’. Ernest Solomon believes in the ultimatum “Be a white man or nothing” (428). This makes the Indigenous people especially the part Aboriginals to don the ‘white man’s mask’.

Kathleen is a good example of internalization of White mannerisms. The colonizers values are so deeply embedded in her that she feels like an outsider living in the reserve after Ernest Solomon rejects her. She constantly has to face comments and criticism like “She thinks she’s white!...” “Hey look, at this white woman coming along this way” (139). In the reserve she keeps the Aboriginals at a distance all because she wants “to be like a white woman, to have rights and respect” (139). While living in the reserve in a hut built from materials Kathleen and her brother could salvage, she still insists “that they have a table; she didn’t want to eat on the ground” (138-139). She tries to imitate the White lifestyle which she had been exposed to at Sergeant Hall’s house and later at Ernest Solomon’s place after her marriage to him. “She dug out some little grass trees,...and stuck them in the ground to make seats around her table. She fashioned cushions from scraps of hessian stuffed with grass and leaves” (139). The part Aboriginals are fooled into believing that by donning the ‘white man’s mask’ (at times forced upon them) they will be accepted
into the wider society. Despite all the efforts that they make they are never considered to be Whites.

The white mask becomes a way of assuring the half-castes a sense of equality and respect. Will Coolman regrets pretending to be White as a young boy and turning his back upon his cousins. Jack Chatalong comforts him by saying “We were all like that, I reckon. Had to be” (296). The equality and respect assured to the part Aboriginals are elusive. The half-castes are very conveniently depending upon the fancy of the White man, declared too white to be black or too black to be white. As Fanon had written in his monumental work *Black Skin White Mask* – “The colonized subject experiences dehumanization and psychic trauma upon realizing that despite the use of ‘white masks’ he will never be able to attain the whiteness that he has been conditioned to desire” (Roy 340).

Native Canadian writer Thomas King too exhibits in his novels the desire of his native characters to become White. In Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*, Lionel Red Dog is reprimanded by his aunt Norma for pretending to be like a White. He resembles his uncle, Eli Stands Alone who in his youth had “wanted to be a white man” (King 36) but had returned home to rediscover his roots. Lionel’s desire to be a White man arises from his refusal to accept Natives as his role model. Having been fed on popular literature and movies where Natives are misrepresented, Lionel instead chooses John Wayne, a White Hollywood hero as his role model. Despite having a lot of famous Native men and women, “Warriors, chiefs, councilors, diplomats, spiritual leaders, healers” and even his grandmother, Lionel wants to become John Wayne (241).

Eli Stands Alone has remained away from his people for years wanting to be White, too embarrassed to be associated with his own people but he finally returns home to become “An Indian back on the reserve” (262).

While watching a Black woman and a White man eating breakfast in a restaurant Alberta, a Native woman recalls the remarks once made by her colleague that “Canada was an all white country, that the only reason there were any blacks in Canada at all was because of the Commonwealth” (282). She herself agrees with the observation made by her colleague. At the University “the only blacks she had seen
had been exchange students” (282). This also proves that despite Canada being a racially diverse country, preferences for Europeans still existed.

In *Benang: From The Heart*, Kim Scott uncovers the double standards and discrimination in the several acts and policies implemented for the benefit of the Indigenous Australians. Along with the physical as well as socio-cultural assimilation of the part Aboriginals, the policies formulated by the colonizers were subtle measures to discriminate as well as divide and rule. Even if the White man’s “desire to improve the lower order was invariably well intentioned but commonly revealed notions of social superiority” (Robertson 5).

Jack Chatalong is a half -caste who himself claims that he does not mix with the full blood Aboriginals. By doing so he completely adheres to rules forbidding half-castes to associate with the full blood Aboriginals. He writes a letter of request to the Chief Protector of Aborigines

... I am half -caste and I don’t mix up with the blacks and I work hard and earn a living the same as a white man would… I can read and write but I have now been barred from going into a pub… could you do anything in the way of granting me a certificate of exemption. (Scott 64)

His plea is rejected. A certain degree of ambiguity and ambivalence existed in the issue of exemption certificates. Half -castes like Jack Chatalong never knew the conditions based on which their requests would be granted or refused

Certificates of exemption were issued to the mixed blood people. People possessing these certificates were required to disassociate from their Aboriginal family, culture, language and spirituality as they were supposed to be White people in the making. Instead of helping to absorb the half-castes into the mainstream, the exemption certificates caused isolation and separation. The policy and laws formulated by the colonizers was marked by a certain degree of arbitrariness. The colonizers possessed the power to mobilize the laws and at the same time to suspend them according to their whims.

The position of the half -castes, on the way to racial improvements by being declared ‘honorary whites’ is confusing and perplexing. The acts and policies keeps
them in a state of bewilderment, entangling them in a web of do’s and don’ts. Harry Cuddles, another half-caste has the exemption certificate but is not served alcohol. “The barmaid would not serve Harry. It’s the law.” “I got an exemption Dog tag, he thought….. “Listen mate you might have some bit of paper but we know what you are. You don’t belong here. Not with us” (316). Despite, the exemption certificate that he carries which segregates him from his own people, the Whites are not ready to accept him into their society.

The exemption certificates were issued by the colonizers with the intention to make the half-castes like Whites through socio-cultural assimilation. The certificate forbade them from associating with the full blood relatives. On one hand it, declared them to be ‘honorary Whites’ on the other the administration made statements like – “we must be careful to see that the half caste is not given the same liberties that are enjoyed by the white man. We do not want any further mixing of the population. We want to keep the white race white” (Shoemaker 21).

Harley’s Uncle Will is part Aboriginal, “an enterprising young man. His fair skin, his education, his isolation” makes him more acceptable to the white society (120). However, the White man in the making works as a shit cart driver for Ernest Solomon during the Great Depression. The ‘first white man born’ is refused the “susso” (sustenance payments) by the welfare department given to the truly needy during the Depression. Instead he is directed to the Aborigines Department. Despite being taught to act and behave like a White man, he is suddenly treated as an Aboriginal. He does not understand the discrimination practiced. He considers himself, until fully accepted by the Whites to be “provisionally uplifted” (168).

The Indigenous people of Australia have been frequently exposed to the explicit or implicit manifestations of racism since colonization. They still endure

... everyday mundane, negative opinions, attitude and ideologies and the seemingly subtle acts and conditions of discrimination against minorities namely those social cognitions and social acts, processes, structure or institutions that directly or indirectly contribute to the dominance of the White group and the subordinate position of Minorities. (Narogin 11)
Half-caste, Sandy Mason Two who had gone to war still has to face racial discrimination when he returns home. His contribution in the war is totally overlooked. He does not expect a hero’s welcome but wants rights and to be treated respectfully if not equally for his contribution to the White man’s war. Sandy Mason Two returns from war with a newly achieved self confidence and a “taste of near equality” (Shoemaker 32). However, when he and many like him return, the services rendered by them are forgotten. The concerned authorities refuse to issue him the exemption certificate. Back home the eternal war against racism begins all over again. Having being treated as equals in the line of fire it is disappointing to face prejudices and intolerance again.

With an improved self –esteem, Sandy Mason Two gets off the train and plans to charge “at the city thinking to take it with his boldness” only to be thwarted by discrimination” (Scott 122). In spite of the contribution he has made, he is refused the exemption certificate which could have given the impression of him joining the wider community. The Chief Protector denies him exemption even though he is a “half-caste….. unusually fair….. remarkably fine features. Very well spoken” and contributed to the war (124). He has to accept the same inferior position which he hoped had changed because of his efforts in the war. But he still has to face contempt and prejudiced behavior of the colonizers. Rosemary van den Berg in her book *Nyoongar People of Australia: Perspective on Racism and Multiculturalism* points out that after the war in which the Indigenous people had fought neck to neck with the White soldiers, once more became an ‘invisible’ race when they returned home. One possible reason, she says of the invisibility of the Aboriginal contribution in the war can be the White man’s desire to project an image of White heroism and that the Aboriginals did not fit into this equation.

The Chief Protector leaves Sandy Mason Two confused regarding his status. “I am not an aboriginal but I am treated as if I am one” (125). He is not aware that try as hard as possible, it is the Chief Protector and his representatives “Who decide who is or is not Aboriginal” (125).

Jack Chatalong wants the exemption certificate so does Sandy Mason Two, both are refused the certificate. Sandy Mason Two and others like him want to possess the exemption certificate and maintain a distance from their own people not because they desire to be White men but because of the sense of security it provides
them. Sandy Mason Two says, "...I have always tried to keep away from Aboriginals because I knew the people would try to bring me under the Aborigines Act. And they took your children, hunted you down, moved you for no reason" (147). The exemption certificate is much desired under such circumstances. Harry Cuddles has one but is not exempted from the restrictions of the acts. Will Coolman is directed towards the Aborigines Department even when he is not supposed to associate with Aboriginals. The impossibility of the half-castes being provided with equal rights is evident in Chief Neville's statement that the Aboriginals "have as much hope of getting an exemption as a camel has of getting through the eye of a needle" (125).

The exemption erased the racial identity of the Indigenous population. Their dislike for the certificate was expressed in the term "dog tag" used for the certificate. The only reason the half-castes wanted to possess it was because it was one way through which they could escape being "pauperized and kept under the act" (125). This certificate claimed to free the half-castes from the restrictions and discrimination of the acts and policies. However, the exemption certificates did not save them from the restrictions neither did it gave them an entry into the White society. While the policy of assimilation promised complete absorption of the part Aboriginals, the exemption certificates promised freedom from restrictions and equal treatment, but the inherent racism made the Whites to keep on delaying, postponing and obstructing the fulfillment of promises. After all the Aboriginals were just "men only tenuously citizens of their own country..." (411).

The Aborigines acts and its various regulations and the assimilation policy were neither protective nor assimilative. The intention behind these acts and policies was racial discrimination, gradual extinction and elimination of the Indigenous Australians. The Aborigines Act from 1869 and the Aboriginal Land Act of 1970 were presented as protection policies but were discriminating, restricting and repressing. The Indigenous people "could be moved anywhere, told who to marry, where to live, had to get permit to work, not allowed to drink or vote..." (218). The protection policies were intrusive and suppressive. They were implemented to segregate and compartmentalize the Aboriginals and the Whites as well as to enforce the view that the Whites were the superior race. There was a chasm between the stated aims of the protection and assimilation policies and its practice. Kim Scott shows how
restrictions were imposed upon the Indigenous people in the guise of protection policies.

Unlike the freedom of the pre-colonial times, the Aboriginals were disallowed from camping where they wished. They no longer possessed the freedom of movement. Farmers “came down to their camp on horseback had a rifle. “You’re not camping here”. But they always had…. He fired the rifle into the ground in front of them and left no way to argue” (283). Kim Scott exposes the bullying tactics used by the White farmers to keep the Aboriginals in a state of fear and subjugation whenever the Aboriginals tried to resist restrictions on their freedom to move over their lands. The White pastoralists

    crept to the natives camp deep in the night, gently raised their weapons and fired on earth-shattering volley over the heads of the sleeping natives. The natives rose as one man, and as one demented man they screamed and fled through the bush... After the shooting and chuckling like naughty schoolboys, they [Whites] wandered about the deserted camp... Thus, all attempts at uprising were frustrated in such a way as to leave no bitterness but just a quiet sense of mastery on the part of the white man, and a good lesson to the primitive mind (185-86).

Fanny, a full blood Aboriginal woman works with Harry Cuddles, a half-caste trapping and selling possums. They are told that they need license to sell possum skins. According to the Aborigines Protection Act 1886 the half-castes were expected to become self supporting in order to be absorbed into wider community. They should not be a burden to the state. When Harry Cuddles with the help of Fanny and Jack tries hard to become self—supporting he is told,

    “You need licenses for possums, if you’re selling. The police took away pieces of wire and rope which might be used for snares... The second policeman came and stood very close, chest to chest with Harry. He grinned. “Yeah, we’re your protectors. Just helping you” (312-313).

The Whites saw to it that the Aboriginals did not achieve self-sufficiency. Restrictions and equivocal policies were applied to impediment their capability to compete economically. The Indigenous people were not allowed to exhibit signs of
self-reliance or be self-sufficient. They always had to be subservient to the laws of the colonizers. The several so called welfare economic policies formulated by them were just to disempower the Aboriginals so that they remained forever reliant on the colonizers and became entangled in a web of despondency and dispossession. The laws and policies just provided a sense of false security. Harry is also refused a loan which he needs to upgrade a piece of land he owns, failing which it will be taken by the Whites. On one hand, the administration wants men like Harry Cuddles to be self-reliant yet on the other they see to it that they are incapable of being so. When the loan is refused Harry Cuddles realizes that a half-caste does not, cannot have the same rights as that of a White. He has no right to own land and live a life of dignity. He is unaware how racial discrimination operates everywhere and at all levels. At the bank he realizes that “his property [isn’t] securely his... .” ‘It’s nothing personal’,… . ‘Its’ the law, it’s the colour of your skin, Harry. Who your mother was, and your father too” (314). Harry Cuddles experiences direct and deliberate racism at the bank. He is refused the loan because of the colour of his skin. Deliberate discrimination is practiced in order to create a position of disadvantage for Harry Cuddle so that he will be “forced to put the land on the market” (315). Harry Cuddles reacts in frustration over the duality of laws and policies “Protection Act? I don’t need it, I don’t need that. Just fair treatment, same as anyone. That’s what I want from a law, any law, new one or old one just the same” (315).

The duality in the working of the policies and laws not only kept the Aboriginal man in a state of confusion and hopelessness but also made him lose his self-respect. He was reduced to a position where he was unable to play the role of the provider for his family and community. The policies were creating more problems for the Aboriginals than solving them.

Licenses and permits were issued and revoked according to the likings of the administrators and local protectors. Sandy Mason Two for instance, wanted to participate in the rifle match his wish was thwarted by Sergeant Hall. “You need a license – and if you already got one…. I’ll revoke it” (255). All of these men had been mislead into believing “that the less full the blood, the lighter the skin, the nearer one stands on the scale of civility, civilization and enlightenment and therefore the greater the rights to grog, to voting, to sex, marriage, freedom of movement etc” (Tatz 77).
Sandy Mason One is a White married to a full blood woman named Fanny and father to three children – Sandy Mason Two, Harriette and Dinah. He registers his marriage as well as the births and marriages of his children in order to validate their existence. As a man of foresight he knows that if he “registered his child then it would be murder when [the Whites] took, used, killed like they did” (Scott 180). The registration is done in order to protect his children and in hope of a better future for his half-caste children. The registration could ensure their gradual acceptance into the mainstream. However, his hope that a better future awaits them is belied as his children are subjected to racism, subjugation and prejudices. They grow in a “climate of denial and shame” (99). The Aboriginals realize that the protection and assimilation policies are euphemisms for repression, segregation, and marginalization. The Aboriginals become people who are included in, as well as excluded by the policies. The policies are just forms of institutionalized racism as they are formed and operated by the administrators to foster discrimination.

Even Thomas King in his novel Medicine River very subtly shows how the Indian Act of 1876 in Canada has subjugated and segregated the Natives. Its effect is felt to the present day by the First Nations. While the Indian Act was introduced to protect the Indigenous Canadians it turned out to be more intrusive and oppressive than protective. “The Canadian Government through the Indian Act of 1876 and subsequent legislation and treaties, introduced institutionalized racism in the relationship between Canada and its Aboriginal peoples that flourish today” (Legalized Racism).

With an aim to assimilate the ‘First Nations’, the process of enfranchisement had been introduced in the Indian Act. The procedure of enfranchisement was that the ‘First Nations’ would voluntarily relinquish his Indian status and everything associated with it. However, the Native woman automatically lost her Indian status if she married a non-native. Her children would also lose their Indian status. Will in Medicine River endures the consequences of the raciest and sexist policy of the Indian Act. Will’s mother is married to a non-Native therefore, she loses her Indian status and along with it the right to live in the reserve. Even her two sons Will and James are not allowed to stay in the reserve. Will’s cousin Maxwell, enlightens him regarding the loss of Will’s status. Even the death of his non-Native father makes no difference in his position. He is still kept out of the reserve because it is the law. “No”, said
Maxwell, “you can’t. You guys have to live in town cause you’re not Indian anymore”. “Sure we are,” I said, “Same as you”. “Your mother married a white”. “Our father’s dead.” “Doesn’t Matter” (King 9).

The result of the loss of Indian status is that Will loses all his connection with his family, culture and heritage. Living outside the reserve as kids Will and James never used to participate in the powwows, potlucks and Sundances held at Calgary Friendship Centre. They would “hide at the back of the stage in the dark and watch the people as they moved in the slow; shuffling circle” (209). Will, James and some other kids like them are alienated and disassociated from their culture living outside the reserve. They are too embarrassed to participate in the dances. Not having lived in the reserve, they lacked understanding about the value and importance of these ceremonies. Both the brothers “suffer loss and dislocation from their roots, community and spirituality. This loss has been described as isolation created through dislocation from community support and eldership” which makes them unable to identify with their ceremonies (Movsessi 167-168). Attuned to lead an individualistic life, Will finds it amazing that Harlen Bigbear attends all funerals, powpows, weddings births and even court cases. Equally amazing experience is photographing the huge extended family of fifty four members. The Act which keeps him away from the reserve also denies him the love and security of an extended family. He is also prevented from inculcating the traditional values of being charitable, accommodating and helpful which he perceives in Harlen Bigbear.

Be it in Canada or Australia, the laws and policies introduced by the colonizers had always “been an important institution for perpetuating white privilege” especially those racist laws which encouraged segregation, marginalization and dispossession. (Brodkin 9)

In Benang: From The Heart Kim Scott reveals how the educational system established by the Whites was a manifestation of institutionalized racism. The educational system of the colonizers uprooted the traditional educational system of the Aboriginals. For the Indigenous people, education was more destructive than constructive. Education was used as a tool to transform females into domestic helpers and men into labourers. A Native Institution was established in 1815 in order to
Christianize and provide vocational training to the Indigenous children. This institution was a precursor to all other mission and reserve schools for the Aboriginal children. Education was also a tool to force the Aboriginal children to forsake their culture. According to the Whites “education could be forced on Indigenous children, or it could be withheld from them; it could be delivered in a second rate ways which denied the children real opportunities for development” (Groome 168). Racial discrimination was experienced by the Aboriginal children at school at the hands of their teachers and classmates. They faced direct, deliberate racism and endured the use of derogatory terms.

Jack Chatalong, Kathleen and the children of Harry Cuddles attend school and are greeted with racist slur, “Nigger nigger pull the trigger” (Scott 290) on the very first day. The White children pretend that the Indigenous kids smell of excrement and “Pooh, pooh they cried..... What a smell, what a stink ....” (Scott 290). Katherine is humiliated as her pants are pulled down “to look for paleness” (290). Even their own quadroon cousin Will Coolman feels ashamed by their presence. The discrimination and racism faced by the children makes Harriette speak up at the Extraordinary Parents and Citizens Associated Meeting.

Kathleen speaks about respect and right to education for their children. She voices the concern of every Aboriginal parent for a socially, emotionally and physically safe educational environment for their kids. Her cry is against the discrimination practiced in educational systems where the Indigenous children are not given the same chances as White children. Harriette makes a powerful speech on racial discrimination experienced by them in all spheres of life including education.

Give all children the same chance as your own, and they will do just the same and some not so good probably. I tell you, we’re no dirtier, or lazier, or stupider, or badder than you. You want to throw all the blame for our troubles and your own troubles – onto us. You try to keep us out of town, out of hotels – even some of us who been paying taxes and working as hard as anyone, and you want to keep our children out of schools. (293)

Most of the times institutionalized racism is tolerated and accepted but Harriette challenges the inequality and discrimination practiced. She exposes how
scapegoating is common with whites—"You want to throw all the blame for our troubles - and your own troubles - onto us" (293).

A common feature of racism is exaggerating the disparities between two groups and distorting it enough to cause disrespect and bring discredit. Mark Mustle, a White boy has been told by his parents that Aboriginals "were like monkeys... filthy. His dad talked of a White Australia, about the dangers of contamination and infection" (295). This misleading information is internalized by the child and is exaggerated and distorted when he is with the Aboriginal children at school. He displays his dislike openly "Please Miss. It stinks here near the blacks... the boy suddenly fell to the ground. When the teacher got to him he sat up... rolling his eyes. 'It’s the smell, Miss. I .... I must’ve fainted" (295). White children were being taught the wrong values by their parents creating a division between the children. The White parents’ misunderstanding of the cultural and physical differences of the Aboriginals were being passed down to their children. They were teaching their kids to judge their class mates in terms of skin colour and not their ability to perform. White parents were also promoting isolation of the Aboriginal children from their own.

Racial prejudice is expressed the way in which the White parents withdraw their children from the school. The principal too suggests that segregated school would be best for the Indigenous kids because “they are obviously not welcome here... and the feeling in the community, well.... We expect word from the minister and the police” (300). Even though the principal does not approve of the segregated schools he cannot help the children. He exposes the existence of institutionalized racism. He shows how the power to impose and execute educational policies and decisions lies in the hands of the White ministers and the police. Institutionalized racism is expressed the way in which the dominant group denies access to proper education and causes disadvantage to the Indigenous children.

In the novel, Mr. James Segal, a traveling inspector mentioned to Ernest Solomon Scat that the Aboriginals were “...Child Race. It’s our duty to train them for useful work, and keep them from harm, from causing harm" (47). Assuming a racially supercilious attitude the colonizers disseminated the belief that they belonged to a superior race while the Aboriginals were a ‘child race’. The colonizers “held
numerous and often conflicting views of Aborigines ranging from the sympathetic and humanitarian to the violently racist and bigoted” and portraying the Aboriginals as a ‘child race’ was one of them (Shoemaker 18). It was their racist outlook with humanitarian overtones which made them perceive the Aboriginals as a “child race” which instantly promoted them to assume a paternalistic role. By infantilising the Indigenous population the Whites justified their paternalistic plans which were just another means of subjugation and discrimination. Under the garb of paternalism, the Whites were making the Aboriginals mentally and psychologically weak. It made the Indigenous Australians dependent on the Whites. As the Aboriginal “gazed into a mirror and saw not the face of a child smiling back, but the scowling face of an adult. This instead of leading to action led only to confusion and passivity” (Narogin 11). The Aboriginal were considered to be like children in need to be protected and managed by the Whites. Therefore, the colonizers assumed the role of the elder/parent. The Whites looked upon themselves as a race possessing discernment, competence and astuteness to control the lives of the colonized. However, the main purpose was to keep the ‘child race’ in a state of perpetual infancy and dependency. By infantilising the adult Aboriginals, the colonizers refused them the status of mature citizens capable of taking up responsibilities of their families, community and nation.

Paternalism was a method of suppressing and keeping the Aboriginals in a position of servitude. The Indigenous Australians were presented as a ‘child race’ by the Whites in order to prove their own superiority. This was also done to show the Aboriginals that the colonizers were the parent figure and the ‘child race’ would remain dependent on them therefore, always subservient to them. The novel exposes how varied acts and policies were used to keep the ‘child race’ in a disciplined state of servility. From the creation of the reserves, missions to the inclusive and exclusive nature of the policies, every measure was directed towards regulating the lives of the ‘child race’. The ‘child race’ had to be reconstructed “…a firm hand…boarding house and breeding…cut out the sore spot…absorb and dilute like a small dirty stream into a large and clear one…” (Scott76). Aboriginal men and women are under the protection and guardianship of the White settlers like Ernest Solomon, Sergeant Hall and Daniel Coolman. According to men like these, the ‘child race’ has to be reminded repeatedly that a decent life is possible for the Aboriginals only by accepting the power of the Whites as the parent. According to Daniel Coolman, be it Aboriginal
men and especially women it is necessary to let “... ‘em know they’d be in shit without” the White father figure (88). The colonizers considered the Indigenous Australians to be the White man’s burden which had made them adopt a paternalistic role irrespective of what the AboriginaLS wanted. The paternalistic role “forced the [Indigenous people] into the attitude of a child asking for help from a benign white person” (Dabulskis-Hunter 77).

Kim Scott also shows the racist intentions of the Whites behind the creation of reserves. The establishment of reserves in Australia by the colonizers was a manifestation of rural discrimination. The colonizers considered the AboriginaLS to be a dying and a weak race in need of protection and hence reserves were built where they would be protected. From the very initial stages of coloniztion, the Whites had relentlessly worked towards creating a White Australia. Most of the Indigenous population had died due to diseases, dispossession and violence, the remaining full blood AboriginaLS were shifted to the reserves where they would eventually die. However, even in the establishment of the reserves, the ideology of inclusion and exclusion was practiced as is evident in the novel itself.

An ideal camp... is near enough to town to allow the natives to call for rations when they are indigent, to come under surveillance by the police and other local protectors, and to provide a ready labour force when necessary. However, it must always be far enough from white habitation to avoid complaints and to discourage unwelcome visits by the white men. (Scott 47)

The construction of the reserves was an intensely racist endeavour because it separated and segregated. It alienated physically, socially and culturally the full blood not only from the mainstream but also from their own people. Since the full blood AboriginaLS were regarded as a dying race, the reserves according to the Whites were places of ‘soothing the dying pillow’. A place where the colonizers believed the AboriginaLS could die peacefully and comfortably.

The description that Kim Scott gives of the reserves in his novel is everything but soothing. “There was the camp, the reserve, between the tip and the shit pit and hardly any water for the people were pushed altogether like that” (71). The miserable
lives of the Aboriginals were strictly controlled by the Whites and they lived in a state of abject penury and impoverishment. People who lived in the reserves had no rights or even access to basic amenities.

Section 10 of the Act of 1897 underlined the rules of exemption from the reserve. Any person who was lawfully employed by a non-Aboriginals, any female who was lawfully married or residing with a husband who was not an Aboriginal was exempted from staying in the reserve.

Kathleen works for Sergeant Hall, he is almost like a foster parent to her. She is lawfully employed by the local protector. Later she lawfully marries a White man Ernest Solomon Scat but as soon as he decides to take Topsy as a second wife, Kathleen finds herself in the reserve. It is in the extreme squalor and poverty of the reserve that she tries to survive. Ernest Solomon had once warned Kathleen and Topsy that without his protection, a White man’s protection they would be “hounded from fence to fence” (118). Even through lawfully married to a White man but not residing with him, Kathleen is pushed to the reserve.

Jack Chatalong and Harry Cuddles work for the Stars, a White family. Therefore, they are lawfully employed as the law states and refrained from being sent to the reserve. But when Harry Cuddles is arrested for creating a scene at a pub, the entire extended family ends up in Mt Dumpsters reserve. The reserve is situated “between the rubbish dump and the sanitation depot” and it smells of the “town’s shit” (319).

One of the best ways of controlling and subjugating the Indigenous population was by keeping them in the reserves. The reserves were constructed at places unfit for human habitation. The Indigenous people were pushed by the colonizers to the fringes and periphery of habitable land which were claimed by colonizers for themselves. The reserves for the Aboriginal Australians consisted of “tiny huts, shabby tents, shelters made of packing cases, of flattened kerosene tins, of Hessian-cloth-boughs-bush.... There were a couple of hessian – covered pit toilets at one end of the reserve.... There was no water on the reserve” (319-320). Kyle Bay is another reserve situated at an unhygienic and uninhabitable place very close to the shit dump. Pushed to the fringes, the Indigenous Australians struggle each day to survive.
Violence is often used to keep the Aboriginals under check and strict supervision. Jack Chatalong comes across insensitive and inhuman way of punishing the Aboriginals at the Mogumber Settlement. He notices an Aboriginal man covered in black tar with feathers stuck in bunches to his tar covered body. The tar covered him and stretched in long drops from his eyelids and nostrils. Tar must have filled his ears. His eyes and mouth looked so vulnerable. The bird boy was sobbing. Head bowed. Chicken feathers and tar stuck all over him...Being taught a lesson. Something about being uplifted? (102)

Later Jack Chatalong finds the same bird man imprisoned inhumanly with handcuffs in a little hut made of corrugated iron, no windows and a big locked iron door. An advice is softly whispered to him regarding his survival at the settlement. “Whatever you think about, you keep it to yourself. Careful what you do....” (102).

The Aboriginals had to be under the protection of the Whites otherwise they were herded off like animals to the reserves and settlement where they became protected. The Whites propagated the view that reserves were created with the intention of saving, preserving and protecting the full blood Aboriginals but were in fact created only to control the presence of the Aboriginals. For the colonizers, the separation and segregation of the Aboriginals from their own people and environment would accelerate the depletion of the Aboriginals. With the half –castes being assimilated and the full blood Aboriginals dying out Australia would turn into a White nation. The fact that racist beliefs and discrimination was an essential feature in the construction of reserves cannot be ignored.

In Canada too, the ‘First Nations’ were confined to the reserves which resulted in the colonizers segregating the Indigenous people and occupying the prime lands. Thomas King’s *Medicine River, Truth and Bright Water* and *Green Grass Running Water* are all set in the reserve and give an insight into the bitter sweet life of the ‘First Nations’ in the reserves. The ‘First Nations’ were regarded to be in the primitive stage and the whole system of civilizing them by relocating them to the reserves betrays racist intentions of the Whites. Placing the ‘First Nations’ in the reserves was an effective way of implementing their protection and assimilation policies as well as taking away the lands of the Natives. Whatever policies the
colonizers introduced, they saw to it that their interests were served. According to the Whites the reserve had been constructed to protect the ‘First Nations’ but it was more confining than protective. The reserve constrained and isolated the hunting, gathering and trapping community in one small area.

However, all these years of living in the reserve, the ‘First Nations’ have managed to keep their traditional lifestyle alive. The reserve is considered home and it provides comfort, security and solace especially to those who find it difficult to adjust in the Euro-Canadian Society. Even for most of the characters in Thomas King’s novel reserve is home which provides shelter and connects them to their roots.

In his novel *Truth and Bright Water*, Thomas King highlights the problem of unemployment of the ‘First Nations’. Discrimination is common regarding employment of the Natives. Jobs are very rare in the reserve. The only place they can expect to be employed is at the railroad. It is so because “they can’t find a bunch of white dumb enough to do the work” (King 36).

Racism in the form of stereotyping is expressed here. The ‘First Nations’ are expected to do the inferior and the unskilled kind of jobs. The Whites on the other hand are to be provided with work which is more dignified than the dumb work at the railroad. The Indians are referred to be dumb while the Whites are intelligent and clever enough to avoid such work. Racism is also manifested in the preferential treatment towards the Whites. Wally Preston at the job gate can provide the ‘First Nations’ with some work but though “Wally is nice enough, he always hires the white guys before he hires the Indians” (41). Preferential treatment of the Whites is evident here. Job opportunities are first provided to the Whites and the left over jobs if any, is given to the Natives. It has been documented during recent studies “how autonomous, dignified work has become an institutionalized white and male entitlement...” (Brodkin 11).

In *Green Grass, Running Water*, most of the people in the reserves have university degrees “but they don’t have jobs” (King 30). One of the reasons for the lack of jobs is because “the whites don’t want to hire Indians unless the government makes them” (31). The younger generation are not able to make a significant contribution to the economic development of the community in the reserve as the “unemployment rate in the reserve is close to eighty percent” (33).
Economic marginalization has not been discussed in detail in the novel but has been handled indirectly by Thomas King. Professionally successful characters like Albetra and Charlie Good Looking Bear make no contribution to the economic development of the reserve as their commitment lie outside it. They feel the world outside the reserve provides better opportunities of growth. Lionel too nurses a desire to leave the reserve to make a better life but he is too much given to procrastination to realize his dreams.

In *Green Grass, Running Water*, a promise of modernization and economic development is presented in the construction and functioning of the dam. The dam is supposed to be beneficial for the people in the reserve but everyone knows that “the tribe isn’t going to make a cent off the dam” (King 34). The construction of the dam will benefit the Whites more than the Natives. On the other hand, the eco-friendly ‘First Nations’ will only lose their land and their spiritual connection to it.

As a result of discrimination and preferential treatment in the socio economic sphere from the past to the present, the ‘First Nations’ have suffered a low educational and employment opportunities, have forced them to go astray resulting in the rise of crime rate, domestic violence, alcohol and drugs consumption. All this has lead to the over representation of the Natives in prisons.

In the Medicine River reserve January and her children are victims of domestic violence which she refuses to report to the police. Young men like Clyde Whiteman keep getting involved in petty crimes, thefts and keep going to jail.

In *Truth and Bright Water* for every trouble that takes place the police “Love sticking it to the Indians” (King 234). Scapegoating is a common experience for the Natives. Lum reads out to Tecumseh from a newspaper regarding the condition of Natives in Canada. “It says here Indians make up the largest percentage of Canada’s Prison Population” (King 64). Lum’s conclusion is that they should stop searching for work because sooner or later they will end up in prison. They just have to wait their turn.

The present disadvantaged condition of the ‘First Nations’ is all due to colonization and years of damage that it has done. The colonizers “took [their] land .... broke the treaties .... they’re prejudiced” (86-87) and have denied the Natives equal opportunities to help them lead a fuller life.
The Aboriginal Australians were not only denied equal access to education but were also refused proper medical facilities. This issue has been highlighted by Kim Scott in his novel *Benang: From The Heart*. When Jack Chatalong goes to the hospital when he is too sick to stand, to his dismay he discovers that he is put “in a room with a sandy floor. The Aborigines section. It [is] just an iron shed, with holes in it, and well away from the rest of the building. (Scott 72). The nurse visited the Aborigine section only once a day. The hospitals were mostly engaged in providing medical care to the White settlers, while the Indigenous population was almost left to die. Racial discrimination was evident in the way preferential treatment was given to the colonizers/Whites and differential treatment was meted out in case of the Indigenous Australians. This difference in providing medical care is discernible the way in which the hospital refuses to take in Sandy Mason One’s daughter, Dinah. She is not allowed to enter the hospital as her illness will affect the other patients. However, the doctor is kind enough to provide her with a tent but then “he’s not supposed to treat people in a tent....” (227). This means there is no treatment at all for the sick Aboriginals. The Aboriginals, thus, become aware of covert racism practiced in the hospitals. The sick Aboriginals are not allowed to enter the hospitals for treatment. They are provided a tent as shelter still the doctor will not treat people staying in tents. Even Ernest Solomon, a White man is unjustly treated when he takes his sick wife to the hospital. The doctor refuses to attend to his sick wife Topsy. Topsy is a part Aboriginal, and she is residing with Ernest Solomon, a White man even then the doctor refuses to treat her. This exposes the deception and duplicity of the policy of protection and assimilation. Ernest Solomon is instead directed towards the section for the natives. For the doctor and his staff he is “just another white bloke with a gin, a darky, a boong, coon native” who will not be treated in their hospital (373). Both Dinah and Topsy are denied medical care because of their racial backgrounds.

Employment, education, justice and medical facilities were privileges meant for the colonizers/Whites especially during colonization. The colour white can be considered a privilege in itself with the help of which a person can gain advantage and power over the less fortunate. Cheryl Harris in her work “Whiteness as Property” has likened “whiteness to property as set of socio-economic assets available only to those
who have been certified as white by the major economic, legal and cultural institutions” (Brodkin 9).

Kim Scott depicts how White men play the role of protectors in an attempt to make the Aboriginals fair. The part Aboriginal women in the novel are surrounded by three categories of protectors who give them training in socio cultural assimilation. First, there is the authorized protector like Chief Protector of the Aborigines who has the right to frame laws and make decisions for the Aboriginals. In case of the fair skinned girl named Topsy the Chief Protector has no objection in her being adopted by Ernest Solomon “a reputable and kindly person” (Scott 106) who will “tend to [her] welfare” (108). A.O. Neville has the right to take decisions regarding half-caste women and their children. “Our policy is to send them out into the white community and if the girl comes back pregnant and rule is to keep her for two years” the child which is born is removed and nurtured as whites, “the mother goes back into service” (159). The decisions he takes are directed towards bleaching Australia White. It implies the removal of the half-caste children to the missions and foster families where they are educated in the White Man’s ways.

The second category of protector is the local protector like Sergeant Hall who also plays the role of foster parents to part Aboriginal children. Kathleen lives with Sergeant Hall and receives training in White mannerism. Sergeant Hall and his wife claim that Kathleen has been properly “taught… the niceties of etiquette” of the White society (91). He encourages Ernest Solomon Scat to marry Kathleen whom he declares “unequivocally, a white girl” (89). The training that she receives at Sergeant Hall’s house is so deeply ingrained in her that she is unable to get rid of it while she is in the reserve. She is snubbed by the Aboriginals living in the reserve for pretending to be a White woman.

The third category of protector is the White husband like Daniel Coolman and Ernest Solomon Scat. These men consider themselves to be saviours uplifting the part Aboriginal women to their level. Daniel Coolman marries Harriette and Ernest Solomon marries Kathleen and Topsy. All these men believe that by marriage they have uplifted the despised race. Ernest Solomon marries the part Aboriginal women “because he [is] advantaged. Because of greed. Because it [is] the challenge of a long
term plan spanning the generations” (100). Ernest Solomon has his own plans of biological and social absorption. He marries Kathleen and then Topsy who is much fairer than Kathleen and well groomed by Ernest himself. Harriette is a half – caste woman and after the death of her husband, Daniel Coolman, Ernest Solomon wishes to “keep her as a display, as a domestic, as a tamed tribute to himself” (115). To keep her as a domestic and to tame her Aboriginality is to make the woman progressively more European till she loses all traces of Aboriginality. Sandy Mason One registers the birth of his two daughters, Harriette and Dinah teaches them to read and write and marries them to the White Coolman twins. Though his intention in doing all this is to protect his daughters but the fact that he is making them more acceptable to the White men cannot be overlooked.

If men like Ernest Solomon and the Coolman twins cannot have ladies straight from Europe then they groom half caste women to behave like White women. Ernest Solomon is proud of the training that he has given Topsy. To him she “Looked exotic... she spoke and moved with remarkable elegance given the limited tutoring he had given her” (135). The taking of White partners was encouraged in the case of half – castes, quadroons and octoroon women. The so called protectors were preparing the women for interbreeding and teaching them to be submissive.

Both Kathleen and Topsy become victims of sexual abuse at the hands of their so called protectors. Kathleen is sexually abused and becomes pregnant by Sergeant Hall who claims to fulfill paternal obligations in the best manner possible. Topsy, a ten year old girl is handed over to Ernest Solomon Scat ‘to tend to her welfare” (108). However, it does not take much time for Ernest Solomon’s parental obligations to turn into lust. He observes that the little girl has grown to be an adolescent of his taste. He does not hesitate to introduce her as his wife without even marrying her. His wife Kathleen realizes what is to come when she discovers “Ern embracing Topsy, bending her over the matrimonial bed with her skirts all bunched up,...”(135). Both the women have become too submissive to resist the situation. Kathleen silently walks out of the house “she did not slam doors, did not stamp her feet” (135). Topsy, on the other hand reconciles to her position. Ernest Solomon Scat carries on with his act of biological and social assimilation and brainwashing Topsy to reject her Aboriginal associations. Their kids are welcomed as successful outcome of his experiment in eugenics.
The removal of children was practiced under the policy of assimilation. Part Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families so that they could be taught the White man’s ways. The half - caste children were placed in missions on foster homes so that they could be socio-culturally absorbed into the White society. The removal of children was a manifestation of cultural racism practiced by the Whites. The White administrators who encouraged removal ignored the culture based upbringing of the Indigenous children. The Whites regarded the upbringing of the Indigenous Australians to be inefficient and primitive. In the case of half - caste children, it was considered necessary to separate the children from their mothers. The mother was seen as promiscuous and lacking refined ‘maternal’ instincts or domestic training of European women; and the presumed ‘immorality’ of the indigenous mother which had led to her consorting with the European father in the “place” (Edwards 49).

The Whites believed that the presumed immorality of the mother would be passed on to the children. In order to educate the children into the mores and manners of the White society the children are brainwashed into denying their maternal milieu and all Aboriginal connections. They removed the children claiming to provide better education and for the best interest of the child. However, it was the colonizers means of nurturing the children which proved to be more disastrous and seriously disadvantageous to the Aboriginal kids. The removal was also done in order to break the cultural connection of the Aboriginal children.

Kim Scott’s character Harley describes the experience of his father Tommy and other children who were removed from their families and placed in institutions like Sister Kate’s Home. Sister Kate’s Home was a place where quarter- caste and very light skinned children were placed. Social conditioning was the purpose of the institution where the pari Aboriginal children were brain washed to become mentally White. Most of the children at Sister Kate’s home and other institutions were told that they were unwanted by their parents, that their parents were incompetent and worthless with their parenting skills. They were made to believe that they were abandoned by selfish parents who did not care for their wellbeing. These were all methods of severing all emotional connection the children had with their family. The children were fed with lies about their family so that they would never return home.
once released from the missions, boarding schools and institutions. Such institutions were centres for improvement and progress. The education of half castes based on White social and cultural lines was seen as progressive. It would lead to the absence of the half-castes. The progress of the nation was to be measured not by the presence of the Aboriginals but by their absence. According to Kim Scott the half-caste “is merely a passing phase, an incident in history, an interesting event in what we call ‘progress’, a natural transmutation in what we know as cultural evolution. He will solve himself and disappear. That much is certain…” (Scott 7).

When Tommy is left at Sister Kate’s Home by his insensitive father Ernest Solomon, he comes across “…other kids, they didn’t know if they had mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters. Aunty Kate told many, sadly that their mothers and fathers had died or did not want them” (386). Tommy and other children are sexually abused at Aunty Kate’s House. Harley describes how visitors come to the institution, take the children for an outing and sexually abuse them. Pretending to be, good White uncles and foster parents they exploit the children. The progression is from “Uncle father doctor [to] lover” (388).

At the boarding school Tommy meets several children bearing the names “Mustles, Moores, Dones, Stars” (391). Tommy, Scott had heard these names before. The names were of “fathers and grand fathers who had not claimed their other children” (391). They were children who were rejected, neglected and disowned by their White fathers.

The description of violence Harley suffers at the hands of his grandfather while living at a gentleman’s boarding house owned by his grandfather is unnerving. It is reminiscent of the similar kind of violence perpetrated upon children living at boarding schools and missions. Harley’s bed wetting is cured “with an ingenious system… whereby an electric shock was administered to [his] penis” (18).

As promised the children in the institutions were not trained to become White ladies and gentlemen but to become domestic helpers and labourers. Skills were inculcated in the children not by training them but by making them cook and labour hard in the institutions. While the girls were made to wash and clean, the boys were made to work. Harley’s daily routine at the gentlemen’s boarding house is tiring and taxing. Ernest Solomon is a hard task master. Harley serves the gentlemen guests,
cleans their rooms, makes their beds, and washes their dishes, clothes and sheets. The consequence of Ernest Solomon’s training is that Harley revolts and decides to be his grandfather’s Frankenstein, his failure.

The scheme of breeding out of colour followed by the Whites in which the third and fourth generation of part Aboriginals bore “no sign of native origin… . The repetition of the boarding school process and careful breeding... after two or three generations” would totally dilute the Aboriginal strain and Australia would be bleached white (28). The breeding up scheme encouraged in the schools had disastrous consequences. The children grew up with severe mental and psychological problems. They developed adjustment problems, loss of self-esteem, self-worth as well as loss of cultural and racial identity. The education provided to them was also limited and restricted which made them inadequate and ill-equipped to enter the wider society.

All the ‘first white men born’ in the novel experience a loss of racial identity. Even through the policy of assimilation propagated the absorption of the part Aboriginals they are never accepted and made a part of the mainstream. They are also isolated, segregated and alienated from their Aboriginal people and culture. Thus, the part – Aboriginals are stranded “on a no man’s land between black and white” (Shoemaker 18). Tommy and Harley develop a lack of trust and intimacy towards Ernest Solomon Scat for having segregated them from their Aboriginal heritage and family.

In the whole process of marrying, breeding and uplifting the White men forget what great help the full blood and half-caste women have been to them. It is because of women like Fanny, Harriette, Kathleen Topsy and many others like them that White men become intimate with the land. These women are the only true connection to the land, its people and culture. All the ‘first white men born’ as well as the disowned children who suffer from loss of racial identity finally derive their belonging from these women. These men realize that there is nothing dubious and equivocal about Aboriginal culture and people.

In Aboriginal society skin colour has little to do with the inner cultural principles that guide Aboriginal people… . For Aboriginal
people, emotional scars do not necessarily have to match darkness of skin, nor does lightness indicate a lessening of knowledge of, or lack of belief in, Aboriginal culture. (Huggins 18)

The removed half-caste children are welcomed into the Aboriginal community. Harley too establishes his Aboriginal identity by connecting with his half-caste uncles and the stories of his Aboriginal ancestors.

It is the treatment that Harley endures at his grandfather’s place which makes him go against his grandfather. It is when he realizes that he is a product of his grandfather’s experiment on biological and social absorption that he decides to be a failure. Having being a part of an experiment ruthlessly carried out by his grandfather ending up with no racial identity, Harley undergoes a feeling of confusion and a sense of vacillation in between two worlds- the White and the Aboriginal. For him the act of being cut off from his Aboriginal side of the family is akin to castration and being deprived of the potency to produce Aboriginal progeny. “You can imagine; castrated, absorbed bugged up, striving to be more than a full stop, to sabotage my grandfather’s social experiment, to reproduce his family history...” taking into consideration the Aboriginal connections this time (Scott 451). Harley goes against Ernest Solomon Scot. Harley begins with “anger and resistance” (31). He starts his resistance with a decision to alter his grandfather’s version of family history. By amending his grandfather’s version of history “his language, his note.... rough drafts .... clear diagrams and slippery fractions...” (39). He is all set to trace his Aboriginal lineage which will help him discover his identity. Harley seeks to resist rewrite and represent “Ernest Scots words which mutilated and otherised aboriginal history” (Sareen 67). Harley’s work differs from that of his grandfather’s which is just objective chronicles of facts. He challenges and refuses to accept his grandfather’s patriarchal narrative which has been created by marginalizing the Aboriginal people and rendering them voiceless.

Despite the various efforts that Ernest Solomon makes to teach and train Harley, to groom him into a White man, the “native cunning” in Harley prevails (Scott 10). It is this native cunning and the “startling violence” of his grandfather that Harley retaliates (19). He refuses to allow the words written by Ernest Solomon to shape him, his family members and his entire family history. He cannot allow Ernest Solomon to write their family history in which he is liable to ignore and “disregard
those shot, brain-bashed, stolen. Forget those poisoned, those chained…” (495). Harley decides to write history giving an opportunity to his uncles Jack Chatalong and Will Coolman to voice their experiences which would have otherwise remained unarticulated. Harley’s intention is to derive hi/stories from the memories and subjective experiences of his uncles and relatives. Harley is aware that their stories will go beyond the experiences and the scientific objectifications of people and relationships recorded by his grandfather. He embarks upon a journey of discovery through the hi/stories of his half-caste uncles as he knows that their hi/stories are his hi/stories too. While rewriting the hi/story of his people, Harley does not forget to acknowledge the contribution of one great person- Sandy Mason One, father of Harley’s uncle Sandy Mason Two and grandfather to Jack Chatalong. Sandy Mason was “One man coming from elsewhere, staying belonging…” (495). He was one such non- discriminatory White man who married an Aboriginal woman, claimed the children unlike other White men who disowned the children they had fathered from local women. He had not only married Fanny but had also remained with her “within her traditional country” (459). Sandy Mason One is an ancestor worthy to be remembered. He was not only a fair- minded person, he was also fore-sighted- “…he helped us read and write. He chose to put us on paper” Sandy Mason One had registered the birth of his children and sent his children and grandchildren (Jack Chatalong and Kathleen) to school.

Harley takes upon himself the enormous task of rewriting the family history because he needs to tell his children who they are. It is when Harley sees the white bird with the red beak bird appear from nowhere “Flying low at the edge of the rock, its wing beat regular and powerful, it arrowed straight to where the younger bird was hovering and then arced up to join it” that Harley suddenly becomes aware of his duty towards his children (456). “I looked to my children, and — oh, this was sudden, not at all a gradual or patient uplift…looking down upon my family approaching from across the vast distance my vision could cover—I was the one to show them where and who we are” (456). Later, when Harley recalls the incident of the bird to his two uncles, they tell Harley that through this sight of the bird, Harley has connected to the Aboriginal spirits which only a true Aboriginal can see. “Those birds. That was the spirit in the land talking to you. Birds, animals, anything can do it. That is what
Aboriginal people see” (457). It is not only a moment of Harley’s spiritual rebirth but also that of his Aboriginal re-awakening.

The responsibility of rewriting hi/story is immense. He needs to do it “not only for the sake of [his] children, but also for [his] ancestors and for their children in turn [and]... most especially, for [himself]” (21). Harley attempts to recapture all those moments which his grandfather might eliminate from his version of history. It becomes essential for him to reclaim and restore the culture, heritage and history which have been denied to many like him. It is through his rendition of his family history he hopes to provide a Benang (Tomorrow), a better tomorrow for his people. He has to ensure that they should not feel the way he had felt of being “one without history, plucked from the possibility of a sinister third race” (31).

Tommy, Jack Chatalong, Will Coolman, Harry Cuddles, Harriette, Kathleen, Topsy, Harley and many more like them were caught in a web of legislation which controlled their very existence. To escape being restricted they accepted the policy of assimilation and exemption certificates- choosing to lead White lives either unwillingly or with hope for a better future. In doing so all of them experienced loss of racial identity. All of them had become split men and women, “stranded [and]... washed up” (424). They were caught between two worlds. The Aboriginals were categorized into half-castes, ‘quadroons’ and/or ‘octooons’ and much of the Aboriginal blood in them was considered diluted but the obvious traits of Aboriginality still remained. Especially the traits of family and community bonding could not be totally white washed. It was this indelible attachment to land and people that made them reconnect with their people when the Whites refused to accept them as one of them. As Harley discovered that all of them were Nyoongars, “even of [they] married a wadjela, even if [they] had a wadjela dad” (424). The colour of their skin and European grooming became irrelevant. Deep down they were all Nyoongars.

Harley discovers his racial identity when he starts rewriting his family history. He restores his racial identity and sense of belonging when he undertakes a mental journey with his uncles listening to their experiences, their side of history and understanding Aboriginal culture. Accompanying the mental journey is the physical journey with his uncles through the traditional lands. Both these journeys help him to re-establish his kinship with ancestors (Fanny and Sandy Mason), extended family and land.
The revival of history is also of utmost importance to the ‘First Nations’ in order to discover their culture, heritage and themselves. In the novel Medicine River elders like Martha Old Crow, Lionel James, Granny Pete and Floyd’s grandmother keep alive the histories and culture of the Natives. They are the connection to the past. The values of sharing, caring and preserving are present in the elders. Lionel James preserves stories and tells them to the ones eager to listen. Martha Old Crow is the medicine doctor who makes Indian toys. Granny Pete’s house is like a reserve storage where people leave things for safe keeping and Floyd’s grandmother maintains a large extended family. Isolated, alienated and individualistic men like Will are helped by these people to reconnect with their history and heritage as well as discover the true Native in them.

‘Eli Stands Alone’ in Green Grass, Running Water grapples with the question of his identity in his youth. He seeks to form his identity outside the reserve but returns to discover it in the reserve itself among his people. Staying in the cabin which he and his sisters as kids had helped their mother to build, he reconnects to his past. The cabin also connects him with the spirit of his dead mother. Back home and in touch with his roots having discovered his true self, he tries to help the younger generation who are “caught between the past and the western experience” as he himself had once been (King 23). The Sundance at the end of the novel is an attempt to bring the entire community together to be a part of Native ceremony. It is an effort to spiritually connect the Natives with each other and nature.

In the novel Truth and Bright Water, Monroe Swimmer, a popular Native artist returns from Toronto and revives the history of the Natives. He buys the Church which stands on the prairies (a symbol of Christianity replacing traditional spirituality) and paints it. He paints it till it blends in with the prairies and the sky and loses all signs of its existence. He places buffaloes made of iron on the prairies, as if trying to recover what had been lost. He attempts to revive and to remind those days before colonization when buffaloes thrived and traditional spirituality was revered. The bonfire in which the whole community comes together and Monroe Swimmer gives away his belongings is symbolic of the potlatch ceremonies as well as the Indigenous values of sharing and caring. In his own way he seeks to revive the traditional lifestyle and ceremonies.
Revival of history in various forms becomes important to the Indigenous people of Australia and Canada. The whole confusion regarding one’s racial identity can be solved by reclaiming their history and culture and by constructing strong, confident and secure identities based on the acknowledgement of the richness of their history, tradition and culture.

Both Kim Scott and Thomas King have highlighted in their novels how the racist attitude of the colonizers has affected the past and present of the Indigenous people of Australia and Canada. Based on racial differences, the Whites have considered the Aboriginal Australians and ‘First Nations’ to be inferior and incompetent and have denied them opportunities of full development since the colonial times. Differences based on physical, social and cultural spheres have been applied to assume that the Indigenous people are inferior to the Whites. The sense of inferiority and insecurity can be erased by developing a strong sense of belonging to people, community and land. In order to build healthy positive identities, both the writers have suggested a revival of Indigenous history and culture.

Kim Scott goes in depth into the racial discrimination practiced by the colonizers. The acts and policies introduced by the colonizers have disadvantaged and figuratively incapacitated the Aboriginals till the present. They have experienced racial discrimination in all spheres from economic to educational to the judicial system which he has depicted in his novel *Benang: From the Heart*.

Thomas King in his novels *Green Grass, Running Water, Medicine River* and *Truth and Bright Water* has depicted how racial discrimination has led to cultural and spiritual devaluation of the ‘First Nations’. The stereotyping and misrepresentation of the movies have hampered the development of positive identities. Most of his characters are caught between the traditional and the modern worlds. The Native communities are depicted as still suffering from the impact of racial discrimination introduced by the settlers. This is evident in the poor socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions of the ‘First Nations’. Thomas King shows how the economic exclusion, segregation and marginalization since colonization has led to lack of employment, poor housing conditions, financial instability which in turn results in high percentage of violence and crime at home and in the community.
Both these writers have made an attempt to show how the fragmentation caused in the Indigenous people and society by the racist tools like creation of reserves, residential schools, removal of children, the assimilation policy have alienated the younger generation from their history and culture. Kim Scott more explicitly and Thomas King more implicitly explores how the impact of racism has left the younger generation rootless as well as inept and powerless “figuratively castrated: made impotent” (Berg 64). This is so because the mainstream fails to notice and ignore the potential of the Indigenous Australians and Canadians to be productive citizens of their respective countries. Both the writers through their works propose a better understanding of the causes of the disadvantaged position of the Indigenous people. At the same time the effort is to make the readers/wider society acknowledge the diversity of the Indigenous people rather than insisting them to assimilate and integrate into the mainstream. The idea is to build relationships based on equality in diversity. Racism can end by “creating a legitimate post-colonial relationship…[by] abandoning notions of European cultural superiority and adopting a mutually respectful stance” (Short 247). By challenging and questioning through their works the various form of racism existent in their respective societies, both the writers also make people aware that in the presence of racism, reconciliation is not possible. It is by showing a willingness to communicate, and to listen to the brutal experiences of the Indigenous people accompanied by appropriate redressal that the non-Indigenous community can reconcile and rebuild their relationship with the Indigenous people.
Note

1. Paternalism means to express support and concern like a parent by creating a familial atmosphere and treating other people like children. The creation of familial imagery legitimizes paternalism to defend its actions however severe, as being morally righteous. Paternalism cannot be altruistic at all times. For instance, in the context of colonialism, paternalism was imposed on the colonized by forcibly reducing the adult Indigenous population to the status of children. By projecting other people to be unruly and wayward children, paternalism assumes the unquestioned authority of a parent and the right to regulate the actions and freedom of others in all aspects in order to civilize them.
Works Cited


120


