INTRODUCTION
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In order to approach Mudrooroo, it is probably worthwhile to discuss certain distinctive historical events in relation to specific social and political formations characterising Aboriginal existence in Australia. A brief review of the historical, social and political records and how they directly or indirectly influenced Mudrooroo’s writing will be discussed here.

Despite attempts to protect Aboriginal people from death and disasters, the condition of the original inhabitants of the land remained submerged in crucial controversies and ambiguous attempts of revival and restoration. Rehabilitation schemes were introduced by the government and the church also took initiative to save them and give them shelter but nothing lasted. They depended on rations for survival and sustenance. In 1890 and in the post World War I era, they were even deprived of their own land which was let out to non-Aboriginal people for farming. As a consequence, they moved to the fringes of towns and suffered from poverty and insecurity. The identity of the original inhabitants was ignored ever since 1788, and this constituted the ‘Aboriginal problem’ that earmarked their pitiable condition. Their children were driven out of their homes and adopted in white families where they could serve and learn at the same time. In cases of mixed heritage, children with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parent were mostly taken away and used as child labours in white families. Changing their life-style meant providing them with better opportunities and helping them proceed. In this way assimilating them into the white society and culture meant they would be provided equal opportunities to live with and
like other white Australians. This reassured that the Aboriginal races would neither “die off” nor abandon their land. A certain amount of security was provided to them which saw the beginning of the modern land rights movement and the development of the first national organisation of Indigenous Australians. However, the possibility was deterred as in 1963, when the Yolngu people of the north-east community of Yirrkala, faced the problem of traditional land being taken away from them for the use of a bauxite mine. Since the original inhabitants had no legal land tenure system, Australia was declared ‘Terra Nullius’. This in the long run led to the establishment of the Woodward Commission that looked after the land rights of the Aboriginals. Aboriginals were provided with equal rights to vote in 1967 first. The drive towards outstation areas confirmed their link with land and culture reflecting their regular habits of bush hunting, rock climbing, horse riding etc. Yet they could not totally discard the overpowering influence of the European culture. Their transition and transgression gave way to assimilation. A few charters like community living areas and housing facilities were provided to the Aboriginals. But it required mass-scale rehabilitation programmes and highly-skilled technical support system for them. Some of them were benefited but the natural urge and keenness to be one with nature made them follow traditional and customary habits. The law of the land and their closeness with nature could never be denied. Genetically it found expression in the forthcoming generations to come who could not delink their ties with nature. Even when they were imparted education through church-controlled missions, they could not forget their own culture. A contradiction therefore arose out of contrast between the two cultures. To generate internal resources Europeans wanted to control social and economic underdevelopment. But no attempt lasted long as decision-making
power rested on the Europeans and the Aboriginals were not represented in any sphere. Thus Indigenous representation remained a question unanswered always. Formation of the self-government within Australia focused the binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized and the identity crises continued. Homi K. Bhabha emphasized the failure of colonial regimes to produce stable and fixed identities and suggested that ‘hybridity’ of identities and the ‘ambivalence’ of colonial discourse more adequately describe the dynamics of the colonial encounter. Out of this context emerged Indigenous literature in the mid-sixties when writings of Jack Davis, Kath Walker and Kevin Gilbert began to be published.

‘No body spoke to us’ : Entering the World of Mudrooroo

Mudrooroo provides us with a wide-ranging critical survey of literature both oral and written of the Indigenous people of Australia. He speaks of history and comments on the key writers and texts which are reliable enough to form individual opinion. While telling the story of Indigenous writing Mudrooroo gives special attention to the major Aboriginal writers – Oodgeroo, Lionel Fogarty, Jack Davis, Kevin Gilbert. He also views different genres of Indigenous writings such as – songlines, poetry, plays, novels, life-writing and the “pop” songs of Yothu Yindi and Archie Roach. He seeks answer to the questions and controversies of the day: What is Indigenous Writing? What is an Indigenous Writer? How should Indigenous books be published and edited? These are the major concerns of The Indigenous Literature of Australia.

John Fielder in the article ‘Post Coloniality and Mudrooroo Narogin’s Ideology of Aboriginality’, points out that like “Marx’s lumpen proletariat, Indigenous
minorities are often marginalized within post-colonialism because of their minority status, because of their lack of potential revolutionary action". Fielder makes an attempt to support the Aborigines because they are a minority and makes use of the tactics of resistance outlined in Mudrooroo’s ideology of Aboriginality in ‘Writing from the Fringe’. The pathos of contemporary disenchantment and misery, the struggle for existence, the sub-alternized, marginalized predicament encompass the themes of his novels. Mudrooroo recalls the oral story-teller’s art through the use of single-narrator’s perspective which has often merged with autobiographical streaks. His dependence on the way the events are disclosed and the appeal by which he draws his readers close to his texts help him assemble the pieces of information stretched over a wide-span of time into a coherent whole. Even when the narrator feels that he is at a cultural loss, he strives to find his personal and family identity to entrench his footing on his own land.

Mudrooroo felt the strong desire to bring all Aboriginals together and stressed their communions rather than separation belonging to different races and places. Mostly all of his novels portray the man who suffers the malaise of modern society; he is alienated from his family, his community, his land and his own past. Thus, the colonized people who now find themselves as marginalized minorities on lands that were once solely theirs, and designated as Indigenous minorities have been disintegrated from the larger ‘Third World’ entities as the ‘Fourth World’ portray the uniqueness of their historical experience and contemporary plight. The term ‘Fourth World’ coined since the early seventies, has gained currency in the context of Indigenous cultures around the world. ‘While the ‘Third World’ could eventually emerge as a force capable of maintaining its freedom in the struggle between East and
West, the Aboriginal world was almost wholly dependent upon the good faith and
morality of the nations of East and West within which it found itself. Mudrooroo has
etched an important place within the contradictory society and a mixed culture to
reinforce his contribution towards Australian literary world. His voice is that of
protest and he culminates a new genre through his writings. He has served the literary
world always from outside as a recluse as he was at odds with the social structure and
as he was unaware of his true birth-history. He was deprived from his rights of the
land, lineage and heritage. About his town he writes:

“No one spoke to us and at school, I along with the Aboriginal kids had our
own private desk where we sat ignored. I didn’t turn up much...”

The mood of rejection in Mudrooroo’s novels can be justified according to the
situation he had to face in is real life. The uniqueness of his recent writing is in how
“he keeps reverting to his sense of self-sufficiency and inviolability which makes him
detach himself from all groups in the end. He explores ‘existentialism’ and ‘nihilism’
as possibilities and frequently contemplates suicide as the only sensible choice, but
seems ultimately to accept life.” His last but not the least endeavour Not My Place? is
an autobiographical attempt genuinely to find out what his actual place is in the
existential world.

Critics have extensively worked on Mudrooroo. But it seems that the
problematic of identity has not received adequate critical attention with reference to
the Wild Cat trilogies. It seems that Mudrooroo has tried to re-situate the Australian
Indigenous cultural identity in terms of a distinctive element of protest. Mudrooroo’s
novels therefore do not merely make a simple statement on the sufferings of the
Aborigines, rather arranges his fictional strategy in terms of a theoretical frame of protest. This work will therefore use the Foucauldian theoretical frame of incarceration. In other words the problematic of incarceration and protest would be the major focus of the work.
Note


2. http:www.mudrooroobiographical.com

3. A History of Australian Literature