CHAPTER # 2

THE FOUNDATION OF EXISTENCE

THE WORLD OF ABORIGINES
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THE IDENTITY OF EXISTENCE: THE WORLD OF THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA

"We are as strangers here now, but the white tribe are the strangers".
We belong here, we are of the old ways.
We are the corroboree and the bora ground,
We are the old sacred ceremonies, the laws of the elders.
We are the wonder tales of Dream Time, the tribal legends told.
We are the past, the hunts and the laughing games, the wandering camp fires...
We are nature and the past, and the old ways
Gone now and scattered...
The bora ring is gone.
The corroboree is gone.
And we are going".  

---KATH WALKER.

The British settlers came to Australia in 1788. The First Fleet carried around 778 convicts to serve sentences for crime, ranging from murder to minor theft. Along with them, came the upper-class men appointed by the British government to oversee the colony’s establishment, and military personnel to keep order in the colony, which the white government expected to build up in this ‘Terra Nullius or empty land’. Australia, then, was considered as a vast land where nothing existed besides ‘savage brutes’.

If investigated and probed carefully, the anthropological history of Australia reveals something contradictory to the notion of the whites about the emptiness of the continent. Professor Adolphus Peter Elkin and his The Australian Aborigines changed the conceptions of the country and its natives—the Aborigines. According to him, the Aborigines are of Dravidian origin, and they came from as far as the Caucasus or Northern India and their roots were not very different from the whites of Australia. It was due to the weather that the color of their skin changed with the lapse of time. This theory of origin is also accepted by lots of historians, like Marjorie Barnard. In her A History of Australia, she says, "the Aborigines were Australia's first migrants."
In some prehistoric folk movement they were driven from their original home by stronger and more warlike tribes". 4

It took thousands of years for these people to get adapted to this country. In the year when Captain Cook annexed this country to the Great Britain, it was ripe for development by "only civilised effort" 5, because no machinery and other apparatus of human science could change the outlook of Australia then. It was conceptualised that the Aborigines could never be converted into civilised beings. They were the most forlorn of the world races, living a nomadic life, dependent on hunting, scanty fishing, and a few roots for existence. Captain Cook says that this great area of rich land, stuffed with precious and useful minerals, had been lying hidden for centuries from the advancing civilisation of human beings.

There were the same mysterious forests of the Neolithic Age, the same prehistoric animals roaming on the open land, and amidst all these the Aborigines lived and died, neither tilling nor mining the earth. These people lived a life of tenants in occupation, content with a bare accidental livelihood in the midst of mighty riches and natural resources.

After centuries of wandering, the Aborigines left various marks upon the country --a midden of oyster shells and bones, a few flimsy dams of stones for trapping fish, and several carvings on flat rocks or in caves. Although they tried their hands on farming but unfortunately their mia-mias or gunyahs of bark or boughs soon perished into the land where they proliferated from. In the temperate climate their bodies needed no clothes. They were forever on the move. So they never had any possessions except those that were essential for their kind of life, like the bark canoes, wooden spears and boomerangs, throwing sticks, a few household vessels, the sacred tjuringa, bull roarers, stone knives, and several other things.

Their art, their history, their recreation were summed up in the evanescent corroborees which ceased to exist outside memory when the dancers' feet were still, and in their rock and totemic carvings. The Aborigines lived with skill and laughter, and they had their dream-world so old that even the wisest could no longer more then half understand it. During the 1940s Norman B. Tindale, an American ethnographer had produced a historical map that showed the cultural and social life of the
Aborigines. They had more than 600 Aboriginal languages or language-owning groups before colonisation. The data of their language has been derived from the investigation of their customs and cultures. Their customs varied from one group to the other, according to their creation of Dreaming. Aboriginal creation or the Dreamtime concepts signify that nature and culture were formed at the same time by totemic spirits or ancestors who, in the Dreaming, came from the sky, underground and sea and formed the earth, rivers, valleys, hills, rocks and inlets, and established their existence. The Aboriginal people classified these areas as secret and sacred. These sites are simultaneously linked to totems. The totemic spirits or ancestors were believed to have had animal and plant as well as human qualities and are prototypes of the various natural spirits.

The Aborigines of Australia had their codes of laws, which were not gibberish, but directed to survival. They had no written language, though some anthropologists see in the message-sticks the vestiges of a long forgotten script. But they had never lacked long-distance communication, which is made through smoke signals. They can read the earth. Their tribal battles were more ritualistic than real. Survival is more important than bloodshed; manhood is gauged by wisdom, age, and prowess in hunting. They have no domesticated animals. The dingo is at the most tamed but these dingoes could not till the land. Moreover, the Aborigines depend for their sustenance on snakes and lizards, emus, grubs, and simple vegetable food.

Southwest of the Gulf of Carpentaria lies an area of more than 100,000 square miles, the tribes of which are relatively untouched and yet well-known. Some of them are the Arunta, Warramunga, and Binbinga. The Kamilroi are an important New South Wales tribe. The local groups range in size from 20 to 100 persons; in times of scarcity of food and water, they are smaller, for they are not tied to the water holes. But their number increases drastically during the course of time for celebrating rites that are associated with their ancestors. Some of these ancestral rites have as their object the increase in supply of animal or vegetable food. The rites often consist in the initiation of the cry of a bird or animal, wonderfully lifelike, but rather monotonous for the non-Aboriginal ear when it is repeated hundreds if not thousands of times.
But none of them would dream of curtailing the rites handed down, as they are, from their ancestors, who are said to have been human beings imperfectly formed, and only fully developed by the aid of demi-gods from the West, who released their limbs and formed their features. The ancestors are associated with all sorts of rites. The purpose of which is the initiation of young men into the tribe. They include all sorts of mutilations, from simple scarring of the body in the Utabunna tribe to the so-called 'milka' operation, which is so serious as to even endanger life at times.

It is interesting to note that as a youth climbs, stage by stage, to the highest grade, a process that may take 20 to 30 years; he becomes free of the food taboos that are imposed upon him as soon as he is old enough to take part in ordinary camp work. Not only are the choicest dainties, such as emu's fat, forbidden to him when he is young, but he must actually procure the forbidden food and hand over his store untouched to any man who might lawfully become his father-in-law.

If a young Aborigine neglects his duty, he suffers not only from evil magic but from personal chastisement, for the aggrieved man, when the boy is thrown in the air during the initiation ceremonies, strikes him with no gentle hand as he rises and falls in the air amid the group of men. If he goes further and actually makes a meal of one of the forbidden dainties, he incurs such penalties as blindness, deformity, or non-growth of the beard—an important feature in the appearance of the old man. Everywhere the central idea of restrictions is to reserve the choicest dainties for the old man. The belief of magic is very firmly ingrained; no one ever thinks of violating the ritual and cultural laws. And if he were to do so, he would get a severe fright, or he might even, in the course of the initiation rites, simply disappear and be known no more.

A boy too young to be initiated will hear, at certain times, a strange noise, which warns him away from the sacred ground. He is told that it is the voice of a great being called by the Arunta tribe as 'twanyika'. It is also after the initiation he learns the truth; the voice is the sound of the instrument known by the European children as a 'bull-roarer'—a thin slab of wood whirled around at the end of a string, which produces an awe-inspiring, roaring groan.
In the Arunta tribe, these objects are known as 'churinga', as are also stone objects of similar form. One or two are handed over to the initiated youth with strict injunctions not to show them to the women and children. He is told that the sacred ancestors actually carried about various objects now put in charge of a time. He takes them in his hands in fear and prepares to learn more of sacred matters, provided he be a serious youth and not drawn into useless chatter. He also learns more of magic.

The rites in the present form were apparently confined in the main to the northern tribes; elsewhere they were associated not with the ancestors but with gods like 'Baiame', probably introduced by immigrants, or with an 'All-Father', like 'Mungangaua', a more purely Aboriginal god.

But evil magic was probably common to all the tribes. Usually only a small proportion of tribe claimed magical powers; but among the Arunta tribe and their neighbours anyone, man or woman, can perform the necessary rites. However, some kind of magic, such as 'leechcraft' and the 'smelling out' of evil magicians, is confined to men only.

Of other magic rites the commonest is known as 'pointing'. The implement is usually a stick or bone into which evil power is 'sung' --that is the power of the implement depends upon the curses repeated by the performers, and the stick serves as a conductor along which the death dealing force is projected towards the victim. But if it followed a wrong course it might return upon the sender with fatal results.

In the south of Australia the Aborigines had different customs. For them, simple burial was the rule. But among the tribes there are three well-marked series of customs. First, the lamentation and burial (or exposure on a platform); second, the discovery of the murderer --for magic of some sort accounts for most death cases; and finally, a year or two later, the sending of the dead man's spirit to his own place by means of rites connected with the fleshless bones. Perhaps the most extraordinary feature is that of the lamentation --consisting of piercing wails and howls accompanied by gashes, self-inflicted across the thighs, so deep in some cases that the mourner nearly severed, is unable to stand --takes place while the patient is still alive.

Men and women rush about with pointed sticks and clubs, cutting themselves and each other, no one attempting to ward off blows. By the light of a few fires may
be seen a naked, howling crowd, streaming with blood, running wildly round the camp for an hour or more, till the corpse is carried off to a tree some distance away and laid on a platform of boughs. After this the camp moves away somewhere else.

Apart from these rites, life is somewhat monotonous, except the corroborees or dances. The men lounge about, making new or mending old weapons, among which are spear and spear-thrower, boomerang and club. Sometimes they go for hunting for larger animals, such as kangaroo, opossum, and the like; or news may be brought that a sitting emu has been found, and all sally forth to drive it into a net. In the intervals, the women and children collect the ordinary food --lizards, snakes, and small games --together with grass seed, which is their staple nourishment, ground up and made into hard, flat cakes.

One form of excitement is paying a visit to a strange camp. Two minutes suffice for packing up. The man starts on walking, bearing only his shield and weapon; the woman flings her few belongings into a 'pitchi' or wood trough, balances it on her head, and takes a child upon her hip and a digging-stick in her free hand; and the family is ready for the road. All that remains to be done is for the dingo puppies that cannot walk to be assigned to the children or younger women for them to carry. When women are in the party those whom the travelers approach will suspect no hostile intent. But even then etiquette has to be observed, and visitors sit down outside the camp, at a distance of a mile or more, till the hosts are ready to greet them at the spot where visitors are received.

A visit of men alone will arise suspicion, but on the whole fighting is not a serious matter even when hostilities are deliberately planned. Some special enemy may be killed, but in the ordinary way peace comes when a few boomerangs and perhaps a spear or two have been thrown. Ill feeling vanishes once honor has been satisfied.

Marriage customs are complicated. There are rules for each man to choose his bride -- he must seek his bride from all the eight brides in the Warramunga tribe. He will address all women by the same kinship term 'unawa', irrespective of age and condition. All men of the tribe to which the fathers of the 'unawa' belong, have in the same manner their own term, so that when a man speaks of his father-in-law he
alludes to a whole group of men and boys some of whom may be childless. In the same way, he might have hundreds of mothers-in-law. But not one of them is allowed to speak to him. This ban of silence is imposed upon mourners also. All women of the camp would be condemned to silence; but they would not get into complete silence without expressing their thoughts. There is a widely understood gesture language through which they chat gaily with their fingers without uttering a sound beyond an occasional laugh. A woman is released from the ban of silence by biting a man's hand and subsequently giving him food. But there is on record a case of an old woman who was so satisfied to remain silent that she did not perform the rite and thus remained silent for a quarter of a century.

The Aborigines of Australia --isolated, disciplined, and stripped of inessentials --is the most curious palimpsest of history. In their pantheism, beliefs, culture, ritual customs and mode of livelihood, the Australian Aborigines resemble the ancient Greeks, the Chinese, the ancient Mexico, and the Egyptians. A. G. L. Shaw in his anthropological research says that the Australian Aborigines are "the only race which could serve as a common ancestor for all mankind" 6.

Although the Aborigines are dignified with such honors but this picture gradually changed with the lapse of time. As the land became the target for several discoveries, different non-Aboriginal people landed up in this terra Nullius or empty land 7. At first the new comers took only a small fraction of the land. These non-Aboriginal people, to be more precise the colonizers, did not interact much with the natives. They made little difference to the native life. At the very outset, the portrayal of the Aborigines was that of very friendly people, but ‘uncertain in temper’ 8. These outsiders or the colonizers had no place in their immemorial design of life. The Aborigines understood only hunger and thirst and that was the basic essence of their life, rather mode of survival.

John Kenny in his book Before The First Fleet depicts that the interactions between these Aborigines and non-Aborigines, mainly the whites, were cordial in the beginning. None of them interfered in each other's matters; rather both of them happily existed in their own domain. But the thirst of encroachment and occupying
the emptiness of the vast continent, lead the problems of existence and the question of power, superiority and authority came into the forefront.

The Aborigines preferred to live in their own world without much interference. Only when their spears were taken from them, their land was occupied, their sacred places were unregarded, their hunt was taken and not shared—they became aggravated. They made reprisals. They felt they were being victimised and such a feeling aroused a sense of revolt in them. Soon they spearred and attacked the whites without understanding the distinction between the innocent and guilty. Thus the demarcation between the Aborigines and non-Aborigines was germinated at this primary stage of history. The concepts, the notions and the ideas about the Aborigines that they are of friendly nature, gradually changed. As a consequence, the affinity among the whites, rather more specifically the colonizers, and the natives, changed into a hostile, inimical one. “The whites started to torture the natives and vis-à-vis the aborigines tortured the whites, whenever opportunity facilitated” ⁹, says Erbacher in his *Aborignes of Rainforest*.

As time passed by, tortures became acrimonious and pernicious. The whites were more advanced with scientific and lethal weapons to protect themselves, so that the number of aboriginals dying increased at a very high rate. This hostility continued for decades. It perhaps began with the possession of the mainland of Australia, but soon changed into a complex war of control of one over the other through superiority of ethnicity of either the whites, or the aborigines.

The ethnic conflict between the colonizers and the natives took a different form and shape when another race formulated with their intimate interactions; and as this mixed race came into the picture, the overall portrayal of the Aborigines changed into a different one by the mid of the last century.

Although in the first decades of settlement Aboriginal people were grouped by reference to their place of habitation, in subsequent years, as settlement resulted in more dispossession and intermixing, a raft of other definitions came into use. The most common involvement referred to 'Blood-quotum'. 'Blood-quotum' classifications entered the legislation of New South Wales in 1839, South Australia in 1844, Victoria in 1864, Queensland in 1865, Western Australia in 1874 and Tasmania in 1912.
Thereafter till the late 1950s States regularly legislated all forms of inclusion and exclusion (to and from benefits, rights, places etc.) by reference to degrees of Aboriginal blood. Such legislation produced capricious and inconsistent results based, in practice, on nothing more than an observation of skin color. To illustrate these inconsistencies, the historian Peter Read, drawing on documented sources, has offered the following conflation:

"...In 1935 a fair-skinned Australian of part-indigenous descent was ejected from a hotel for being an Aboriginal. He returned to his home on the mission station to find himself refused entry because he was not an Aboriginal. He tried to remove his children but was told he could not because they were Aboriginal. He walked to the next town where he was arrested for being an Aboriginal vagrant and placed on the local reserve. During the Second World War he tried to enlist but was told he could not because he was Aboriginal. He went interstate and joined up as a non-Aboriginal. After the war he could not acquire a passport without permission because he was Aboriginal. He received exemption from the Aborigines Protection Act—and was told that he could no longer visit his relations on the reserve because he was not an Aboriginal. He was denied permission to enter the Returned Servicemen’s Club because he was in the borderline." [Read: p. 5.]

There were surprisingly few challenges to the appropriateness of these definitions, for instance, the Europeans charged with supplying liquor to Aborigines. Few judicial pronouncements on their appropriateness were made but these judgments were seemed to support the classifications.

Federal legislation was quick to endorse State discrimination (the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 effectively disqualified 'aboriginal natives' who were not already on State electoral rolls) and the Federal Government was quick to accept the administrative usefulness of the preponderance of 'blood' criteria (e.g. for deciding if an individual was Aboriginal for the purposes of being counted under section 127 of the Constitution or 'white only' labor laws as in the Excise Tariff Act 1902).

Although the Federal Government tacitly accepted and worked in with State definitions right up to the 1950s, but the 1960s saw great changes to Australia's society and culture in a very different form. Basically, Australia has undergone the cohesive dismantling of culminating social and political spaces of each individual living in the land. There were many causes, including ethnic diversity produced by
post-war immigration and the decline of Great Britain as a world power with its subsequent lessening importance for Australia relative to that of the United States. This was especially evident during the Vietnam War. The post-World War II generation - the so-called 'baby boomers' - emerged as an active force, seeking changes in political, economic and social relationships.

In 1967 the Australian people voted overwhelmingly in a national referendum to give the federal government the power to pass legislation on behalf of Indigenous people and to include Indigenous people in future censuses. The referendum result was the culmination of a strong campaign by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and was widely seen as a strong affirmation of the Australian people's wish to see its government take direct action to improve the living conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

After a federal referendum on the topic, Aborigines became citizens and were allowed to vote in state and federal elections. The Federal Government's constitutional preclusion from legislating with respect to Aboriginal people prior to 1967 prevented it from creating its own raft of restrictive definitions. When policy entered a more progressive period in the late 1960s and 1970s the 'blood-quotum' definitions, which had never been accepted as meaningful by Aboriginal communities themselves, were relatively easy to abandon.

Throughout the 1970s a lot of legislation defined an 'Aboriginal' as 'a person who is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia.' Though possibly an improvement on 'blood-quotum' definitions, the utility of this 'Aboriginal race' definition can still be questioned, not least of all on the grounds that there is no such thing as an Aboriginal race. Most scientists long ago stopped using the word 'race'. Darwin wanted to replace typological thinking with the concept of populations and in the Descent of Man (1874) devoted several chapters to refuting the notion that races were separate species. For the modern anthropologist a 'human tree' can do no more than show the frequency (not exclusiveness) of genetic traits in sample populations and more meaningful divisions of humankind are suggested by region, culture, religion and kinship.
It seemed that identity became essential for existence. The craving for an
identity became an important quest for every individual born within the fresco of
Aboriginality. Very soon, the complexity of existence became the struggle for
survival for the Aborigines as well as the mixed race. It was not only the struggle,
along with it came the conflicts of cultures and ethnicities, and the requisition of
spaces. The colonizers or the whites became the superior authority and their
domineering character ruled the others out of the picture. The natives of Australia
gradually got trapped in such struggles and quests that they lost the very essence of
existence. Everywhere they were discriminated, demarcated as underprivileged, and a
sense of rejection and denial got proliferated into a sense of survival.

Soon the Aborigines started demanding their own space—because they felt
that their identity was being overshadowed by the "superior" other. Their existential
identity had circumscribed them to a particular domain from where their voice for
their rights could not be enunciated properly. The natives and the mixed race became
the severe victims of this battle of superiority. They were deprived of many
privileges, like education, civil rights, etc. Racial discrimination became a norm.

Demarcating factors led to the question and demand for space and identity.
The unprivileged races and ethnic groups wanted to be recognized with proper human
rights. In 1975, the Commonwealth Government Legislature passed the Racial
Discrimination Act. This act states that equal respect must be accorded to the interests
of all races including the Aboriginal people. The preamble states that:

"The law, together with initiatives announced at the time of its
introduction and others agreed on by the Parliament from time to time, is
intended, for the purposes of...the 'Racial Discrimination Act 1975', to be a
special measure for the advancement and protection of Aboriginal peoples
and Torres Strait Islanders. ..." [Stephenson: p. 13] 12

But such acts were validated only on administrative grounds, for the natives of
Australia were still discriminated ruthlessly. After the sanction of the Racial
Discrimination Act in 1975, the aborigines still did not get enough accommodation in
Australia. They were still deprived and became the victims of marginalisation, on 'an
unjust and discriminatory doctrine'. This 'doctrine' refused to give 'rights and
interests in land of the indigenous inhabitants of settled colonies'. 13
The Racial Discrimination Act 1975 overturned the racist element of the country. This Act seeks to prohibit racial discrimination and bring about equality before law. Judge Brennan declared a rationale of extending full respect to the rights and interests of the indigenous inhabitants of the settled colony. This Act also demands that the Aboriginal people's traditional relationship to the land be treated equally with other interests. Further, the Act also prescribes that the terms of consideration and protection be legitimised for the Aboriginal people of this country.

In the 1980s a new definition was proposed in the Constitutional Section of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' Report on a Review of the Administration of the Working Definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Canberra, 1981). The section offered the following definition:

"An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he (she) lives."  14

A definition similar to this had already started to be used by the some parts of the Commonwealth in 1978 and the Report of the Aboriginal Affairs Study Group of Tasmania, (1978, p. 16) found that this definition:

"...provides three criteria which are necessary and sufficient for the identification of an individual as Aboriginal and is sufficient for such identification in Tasmania."  15

The 1981 Report gave the new definition added impetus and soon this three-part definition (descent, self-identification and community recognition) was adopted by all Federal Government departments as their ‘working definition' for determining eligibility to some services and benefits. The definition also found its way into State legislation (e.g. in the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 where 'Aboriginal means a person who: (a) is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia, (b) identifies as an Aboriginal, and (c) is accepted by the Aboriginal community as an Aboriginal' and was accepted by the High Court as giving meaning to the expression 'Aboriginal race' within Section 51 (xxvi) of the Constitution. It was also used by the Federal Court when, in a first instance decision, it found that the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody had no jurisdiction to inquire into the death of
Darren Wouters as the community did not identify him as Aboriginal nor did he identify himself as Aboriginal. Similarly, several justices in The Commonwealth of Australia v Tasmania, (1983) 158 CLR 1, observed that there are several components to 'racial' identity and that descent was only one such component. Justice Brennan concluded that while proof of descent or lack of descent could confirm or contradict an assertion or claim of membership of a race, descent alone does not ordinarily exhaust the characteristics of a racial group', while Justice Deane argued that by 'Australian Aboriginal' would be meant 'a person of Aboriginal descent, albeit mixed, who identifies himself as such and who is recognized by the Aboriginal community as an Aboriginal'.

The advantages of this three-part definition were not, however, apparent to all. In 1988 the Victorian State president of the RSL, Mr. Bruce Ruxton, called on the Federal Government:

"...to amend the definition of Aborigine to eliminate the part-whites who are making a racket out of being so-called Aborigines at enormous cost to the taxpayers."[John Slee: pp. 7-14]

When asked to explain the Ruxton resolution, the national RSL president, Brigadier Alf Garland, spoke of genealogical examination to determine whether the applicant for benefits was 'a full-blood or a half-caste or a quarter-caste or whatever'.

Public reaction to the suggestion of a blood test included the observation that there is no blood test that establishes Aboriginality and that:

"When any of their numerous and varied kind put a foot wrong—and often even when they don't—white Australians will have no difficulty at all in identifying them as Aborigines and ascribing their shortcomings to their Aboriginality. But when there is some benefit flowing the Aborigines' way, such whites will raise silly questions. As Mr. Ruxton did. [John Slee, 'Definitions of an Aboriginal', The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 September 1988, p. 25.]

The three-part definition was seen by most as preferable to 'blood quotum' definitions of a century earlier. It was seen as helping to protect individuals from the tendency among 'mainstream Australians' to consider 'real' indigenous people as people living somewhere else and others as manipulating the system. The three-part
definition did not, however, completely vanquish the favorite definition of the 1970's that 'Aboriginal person' means a person of the Aboriginal race of Australia. The Commonwealth went ahead in the 1980s to include the 'person of Aboriginal race' definition in the Aboriginal Development Commission Act 1980, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, the Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Territory Act 1986 and then, finally, despite the protests of the Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Mr. Chris Miles, in its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Bill 1988 clause 4(1). Senator Coulter, the Democrat spokesperson on Aboriginal Affairs, argued this definition was tautological and wanted it amended but Minister Gerry Hand claimed in a press release on 30 September 1988 that:

"The definition of an Aboriginal person in the Government Legislation establishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission is the same definition used by all political parties over many years." [The Age, 1 October, 1988, p. 8] 20

The three-part definition was soon facing bigger problems that those posed by competition from either the blood-quota definitions or the tautological race definition. In the 1990s the three-part definition continued to be used administratively and continued to be used by the courts to give meaning to the legislative expression 'person of the Aboriginal race' e.g. Justice Brennan's 1992 Mabo (No. 2) judgment:

"Membership of the indigenous people depends on biological descent from the indigenous people and on mutual recognition of a particular person’s membership by that person and by the elders or other persons enjoying traditional authority among those people". [Mabo v Queensland, (No. 2) (1992), 175 CLR 1 at p. 70] 21

It was soon apparent, however, that the three-part definition was itself open to different interpretations.

In the course of the 1990s there were cases when people identifying strongly as Aboriginal people would claim that the sources were simply not available to prove their Aboriginal descent but that this should not mean their Aboriginality could not be recognized. On the other hand there were people who argued that Aboriginality should only be recognized with evidence of descent.
Although the life of Eddie Mabo had been in the mind of everyone not only in Australia but also throughout the world, however, people knew very negligible things about his life until his personal diaries were published. Unfortunately, he could not see his tireless struggle for thirty years on behalf of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders bear fruit because he died four months before the Court delivered its judgment. Whatever he felt throughout his struggle can never be encapsulated in a few words, but probably these words of his will reveal to some extent his deep sense of pathos and separation:

"I thought of the struggles I've been through in the past years since 1963 to 1991 or to the beginning of 1992. While the rest of Australia awaits with me for the High Court decision to be brought down at any time, would it be in time for me to receive it?" [Thompson, p. 5]

The debate became particularly divisive in Tasmania. In that state many people without 'known' Aboriginal family names, found themselves relying on self or community identification at a time when the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), the main operator of Aboriginal services in Tasmania, was putting more emphasis on evidence of descent and reassessing eligibility for services based on more stringent requirements than those that had been imposed for the issue of earlier certificates of Aboriginality. The TAC started to refuse to allow certain children to continue to attend the Aboriginal Community School in Hobart or access after-school services and extra tuition and started denying other native-identifying individuals access to legal services. This prompted the Tasmanian office of ATSIC to commission Koori Consultants to prepare a report into how the three criteria in the widely-used Commonwealth definition could be applied in Tasmania. The findings of the Final Report of the Community Consultation on Aboriginality in Tasmania, February 1996, tended to support the TAC approach. The report found that an individual seeking to identify as an Aboriginal ought to be able to satisfy all three criteria - and that when it came to proving Aboriginal descent, authentic documentary evidence should be provided to show a direct line of ancestry through a known family name, to traditional Aboriginal society at the time of colonization. The report suggested that setting up an independent unit to research and verifies genealogical material submitted in the support of claims.
Other inputs in the 1990s, was the debate over whether the emphasis should be self/community-identification or descent, included judgment in three Federal Court cases.

The first case was the appeal against the Trial Judge's decision in the 1989 Wouters Case. The initial finding had been that the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody had no jurisdiction to inquire into the death of Darren Wouters as the community did not identify him as Aboriginal and he did not himself identify as such. In Attorney-General (Commonwealth) v State of Queensland, July 1990, the Full Federal Court reversed this decision and found that the Royal Commission's letters patent were framed in such a way as to make Aboriginal descent a sufficient criterion. Indeed, it was effectively found that the category of 'Aboriginal' could expand or contract according to the context and purpose—and the Royal Commission was intent of having such a broad ranging inquiry that its subjects could even include people whose identity was in some part in question. Justice French supported the three-part Commonwealth definition as used by Justice Deane in the Tasmanian Dam case but found that 'the context of those observations by Justice Deane in that case] and the purposes they serve do not translate to this case'.

The second case was that of Gibbs v Capewell, (1995) 54 FCR 503. An order was sought under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989 (ATSIC Act) in relation to the validity of an election held under that act. The first respondent, Mr. Capewell, had his election to the Roma Regional Council of ATSIC challenged on the grounds that he was not an 'Aboriginal person' as required under the act and that votes were cast by people not entitled to do so because they also were not Aboriginal persons as required under the act. In his findings Justice Drummond agreed with the findings of Justice French in the Wouters case —the three-part definition is of use but that the emphasis to be placed on the different criteria in this definition will vary according to context. He argued that some degree of Aboriginal descent was essential, but that the extent to which the other criteria need to be deployed might depend on the degree of descent. In the absence of other factors a small degree of Aboriginal descent was not sufficient whereas a substantial degree of
Aboriginal descent may by itself be sufficient to establish Aboriginality for legal purpose. In general Justice Drummond believed:

"The less the degree of Aboriginal descent, the more important cultural circumstances become in determining whether a person is 'Aboriginal'. A person with a small degree of descent who genuinely identifies as an Aboriginal and who has Aboriginal communal recognition as such would I think be described in current ordinary usage as an 'Aboriginal person' and would be so regarded for the purposes of the Act. But where a person has only a small degree of Aboriginal descent, either genuine self-identification as Aboriginal alone or Aboriginal communal recognition as such by itself may suffice, according to the circumstances." [Mercury, 29 January 2001, pp. 3-14] 23.

The third case was Shaw v Wolf (1998). Justice Merkel agreed with the conclusions of Justice Drummond in Gibbs v Capewell (e.g. that some degree of Aboriginal descent is a necessary, but not by itself a sufficient, condition of eligibility) and stressed the role of social processes in establishing individual identity. According to the judgment, Aboriginal descent did not need to be proved 'according to any strict legal standard', it being:

"...a technical rather than a real criterion for identity, which after all in this day and age, is accepted as a social, rather than a genetic, construct." [The Sunday Tasmanian, 11 February 2001, p. 11] 24.

Indeed:

The development of identity as an Aboriginal person cannot be attributed to any one determinative factor. It is the interplay of social responses and interactions, on different levels and from different sources, both positive and negative, which create self-perception and identity. [The Sunday Tasmanian, 11 February 2001, p. 14] 25.

In conclusion the court found that only two of the respondents were not Aboriginal persons for the purposes of the ATSIC Act and therefore not qualified to stand for election. Although an illegal practice had been committed, it had not been done intentionally, and did not require the election to be declared null and void—just for those candidates’ preferences to be redistributed.

There was an investigation for these acts framed against the Aborigines of Australia, thinking about the contemporary ethics of the Australian people. The Australian High Court, thus, gave a legislative response to the Mabo. This legislative decision of Mabo provided a framework in which native titles could operate. Following Mabo, the Commonwealth Government’s Legislature formulated
recognition and protection of native titles, as the Native Titles Act 1993. At last, through the Mabo decision of Australian High Court, and the Native Titles Act 1993 of Commonwealth Government's Legislature, the aborigines of Australia got recognition.

From the Indigenous perspective some obvious benchmarks for evaluation are the common law as established in Mabo vs. Queensland (1992) and Wik, and the Native Title Act, 1993(Commonwealth) prior to the amendments of the Native Title Amendment Act, 1997, which was originally the Native Title Act, 1993(Commonwealth). These are not as unproblematic as they sound. For example, contradictory statements in the majority judgments in the Wik decision have provided fertile ground for disagreement among lawyers about the fundamental question of the legal consequence for native title of the grant of inconsistent rights under a pastoral lease. This is the Extinguishments versus revival argument. Differences over this issue played an important part in the final form of the Howard/Harradine agreement. The Government was persuaded not to resolve the question in the bill to the Native Title Amendment Act, 1997, instead of insisting on its view that inconsistent rights were extinguished and that its Bill only reflected the common law.

The original Native Title Act, 1993(Commonwealth) provides a benchmark around which there is a stronger consensus of legal opinion. Even on the contentious issue of the threshold test, there was a fairly broad agreement that the intention of the original Native Title Act, 1993(Commonwealth) was to require native title holders to overcome some hurdle to access the Right to Negotiate before a formal determination of their native title rights. There was less support however, on other questions, such as whether the Right to Negotiate itself can be characterized as a statutory recognition of native title rather than as an add-on to the common law. The question of racial discrimination becomes very clear with the propositions and acceptances of such acts. This is partly because it is clear that the rights of a racially constituted group (native title holders) would be overridden to achieve its policy objectives: validation, confirmation of extinguishments (that may go beyond the common law); and allow further diversification on several areas of their employment. These issues have been
canvassed publicly elsewhere. Henceforth, there is a Herculean task ahead of an Aborigine to have a clearance for these acts and be a part of it.

While the consensus demography was taking submissions and conducting consultations, the debate continued. On one side were those suggesting that there were people identifying themselves as indigenous who were not. For example, Tasmanian historian and author Cassandra Pybus stated that four times more Tasmanians are claiming Aboriginal descent than can justify it, and that many of these are descendants of some five hundred black or colored settlers and convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land before 1850. Michael Mansell of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre claimed that 'the bulk of those falsely claiming to be Aboriginal are from the Hobart area' [Pybus: p. 3], and arguing for a system where people have to prove they are eligible to vote—saying the documentary evidence is at hand. On the other hand were those who said the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre leaders simply wanted Aboriginality to be a monopoly of a few prominent families. There were also those, such as the State's archivist Ian Pearce, who pointed out 'the records don't show any particular person is of Aboriginal descent, now or in the past. It is extremely difficult to prove. Equally, it is just as difficult to disprove.'

Indigenous criteria of evaluation must go beyond the benchmarks of the common law and the original Native Title Act, 1993(Commonwealth). The key concern is the ability of native titleholders to have an effective say over what happens on their traditional country or, in other words, the practical implications of the legal changes for the actual exercise of rights. The need for this more fundamental criterion is exemplified by the situation of native title in offshore areas. The Mabo (No. 2) decision did not provide an answer and the original Native Title Act, 1993(Commonwealth) basically allowed other interests to prevail over native title rights (see below). Although the common law and the original Native Title Act, 1993(Commonwealth) as criteria for evaluation are difficult and complex, they are reasonably certain when compared with the question of practical implications. Assessments of practical implications invariably require a great deal of background information and predictions about the likely reactions of participants. Thus, although the practical implications of a particular change for the effectiveness of control over
traditional country provide the most sought after analyses, they are also the most
difficult to do. The best that can be done is to identify the background information,
which is being relied upon, and the assumptions about reactions.

The initiative did not require legislative changes, simply administrative action.
The Minister made rules to give effect to the above recommendation (albeit in a
modified 'postal vote only' form) and these rules were tabled in Parliament (as a
disallowable instrument) on 12 February 2002. The rules were gazetted as the
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (Regional Council Election)
Amendment Rules 2002 (No 1) and included the following:

149 (2), in which a person challenged must provide evidence that
he/she:

'Is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ancestry, and identifies
himself or herself as an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander; and is
accepted as an indigenous person by members of the indigenous community'.

The rules also describe the sort of evidence that is acceptable. It was soon
pointed out that the three-part criteria for eligibility and the evidence requirements
which followed were nowhere to be found in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Commission Act itself, so on 27 March 2002 the Government Gazette Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Commission (Regional Council Election) Amendment Rules
2002 (No.2), in which the above mentioned sub rules would be replaced with the
following:

The submission must provide evidence that the applicant is an Aboriginal
person or a Torres Strait Islander.29

The indigenous-identifying population in the intervals between the last four
censuses (1986, 1991, 1996 and 2001) has been consistently rising at a rate far
exceeding that of the total population and far exceeding that expected from natural
increase (indeed, over this period the fertility-rate of Indigenous women has actually been falling). These statistics have generated some debate. The explanation would seem to lie in a general increased willingness to identify as indigenous (a phenomenon detectable in other comparable countries) and by the readiness of children of mixed partnerships to identify as indigenous. Indeed, where the latter is concerned, the census question, while allowing a person to acknowledge both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origins, does not allow a person to acknowledge both Indigenous and non-indigenous origins. There is an expectation implicit in the questioning that people of mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal origin will identify as Aboriginal. This is despite the fact that in urban Australia at least, there are a high proportion of indigenous/non-indigenous partnerships—much higher, for example, than there are black/white partnerships in America. Similar points were made by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in its October 2002 decision in favor of those; whose applications to be on the Indigenous electoral roll had been rejected by the Independent Indigenous Advisory Committee:

"We note that there do not need to be a great many persons born from associations between Aboriginal women and European men to lead to a number of descendants in Tasmania today. On our calculation, with generations of 25 years and each having three children, one Aborigine could account for 2187 descendants over seven generations". [Independent Indigenous Advisory Committee, Respondent, Reasons for Decisions, 18 October 2002, p. 14] 30

The resultant broadening of the indigenous-identifying group may mean that in urban Australia—the area today where the broadening-of-group dynamic is most at play—there is likely to be a narrowing of the gap between the geography-specific socio-economic indicators of the two groups. The policy implications of this may be that there is merit in moving away from indigenous-specific services or benefits in
urban areas. The present Federal Government appears to be moving in this direction. Thus the convergence of some benefits' eligibility criteria and payment levels and thus the Government's recent commitment in the context of the May 2002 Budget 'to continue improving Indigenous people's access to mainstream services and to better target Indigenous-specific programs to areas of greatest need'.

If considered then, these sorts of discriminating features of reality existed in other countries too. For instance, developed countries like New Zealand, Canada, United States, Norway and Sweden had these differentiating acts existing nominally. Take for example the scenario of New Zealand. The Maori Affairs Restructuring Act 1989, the (recently repealed) Runung Iwi Act 1990 and the Maori Land Act 1993 define a Maori as a person of the Maori race of New Zealand or a descendant of any such person (just as many Australian Acts define an Aboriginal person simply as a person of the Aboriginal race). The Census definitions of Maori have differed over time, but in the most recent New Zealand censuses, unlike the Australian ones, it is possible for a person to identify either solely as a Maori (in 1996, 274 000) or as both a Maori and a member of another group such as Pakeha/European (in 1996, 250 000). In addition to these people, the 1996 census reveals another 56 000 New Zealanders who do not identify in any way as Maori but who have Maori ancestry. Government agencies add all three of the above figures together to arrive at a total Maori population of 580 000 or 16 per cent of the population. Sometimes, as in the New Zealand Yearbooks, this number is given as the number of people of Maori descent.

Even Canada's socio-political scenario was quite similar. In the Constitution Act 1982 Aboriginal peoples of Canada include the Indian, Inuit (once called 'Eskimos') and Metis peoples (people of mixed descent). Indians registered under the Indian Act are termed Registered Indians (once called Status Indians) and are entitled to benefits, which may not be available to other Indians. The latter are often the descendants of Indians who were never registered, did not register as a matter of choice or lost their status under the original Act (an Indian woman and her children lost status rights if she married a non-status man, while a non-status woman gained status rights if she married a status man). In 1985 the Indian Act was amended to
reinstate any Indian person who lost or was denied status because of the discriminatory sections of the previous Act. It is estimated that 1.3 million (3.8 per cent) of Canadians have Aboriginal ancestry, half of whom are Registered Indians.

The United States was not far behind. Even there, the census still counts anyone an Indian who declares him or herself to be an Indian. In 1997 the American Indian, Eskimo and Aleut population was 2.3 million, or 0.9 percent of the total population. By legislative and administrative decision, all indigenous people of Alaska are eligible for Bureau of Indian Affairs services and programs. How intermixed descendants of these people will be regarded in generations to come is not clear. Nor does the legal definition of an indigenous person in other states always coincide with self-identity. To be eligible for Bureau of Indian Affairs services, an Indian must:

- be a member of a Tribe recognized by the Federal Government
- have one-half or more Indian blood of tribes indigenous to the United States, or
- must, for some purposes, be of one-fourth or more Indian ancestry.

[United States Census Bureau, Census Facts for Native American Month, October 1997, pp. 7-14]^{33}

Becoming a member of a federally recognized tribe requires meeting tribal membership rules and the degree of requisite Indian ancestry varies among the tribes. In 1993 the Bureau of Indian Affairs estimated that 1.2 million of the Indian population lived on or adjacent to Federal Indian reservations and were eligible for Bureau of Indian Affairs services.

To register for the right to vote in elections to the Swedish Sami Assembly a person must define himself or herself as Sami and either speak the Sami language as a home language or have a parent or grandparent who spoke the language as a home language. To cater for those whose families had lost their language under assimilation pressures but who still thought of themselves as Sami, if the applicant's parents or grandparents did not speak Sami but were registered to vote for the Sami Assembly, the applicant can be registered. There is no official census of the Sami population which is estimated at 17 000 people or 0.2 per cent of the Swedish Population. 3808
Sami were registered to vote for the Sami Parliament in 1993. Sweden recognizes the Sami as a minority, not an indigenous group.

According to the 1987 Sami Act relating to the Sami Parliament and other Sami legal issues, a Sami is a person who considers himself or herself a Sami, lives in accordance with rules of the Sami society, and is recognized by the representative Sami body as Sami, or who has Sami as his/her first language, or whose father, mother or one of whose grandparents has Sami as their first language, or has a father or mother who satisfies the above-mentioned conditions for being a Sami. There is no official census of the Sami population which is estimated to be between 40,000 and 45,000 or approximately 1 per cent of the Norwegian population.

Such governmental acts and laws exist everywhere in the world. Whether it be the Maoris, or the Inuits, or American Indians, or the Samis, all the natives had to undergo severe discriminatory differentiations. Even the Aborigines of Australia had harsh realities always ahead of them. But the scenario of education portrays something very different. The education for the Aborigines took a different turn in 1975, when the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Victoria took the responsibility for providing education, recreation, legal aid, justice, health, employment and training, business, welfare and housing. Later, the National Aboriginal Education Committee was established in March, 1977 to provide advice to the Commonwealth Minister for Education about the Aboriginals and Torres Straits Islanders. This advice included developing, monitoring and promoting the educational needs of the Aboriginals.

With the passage of time, Victoria became the epicentre of the education waves that created furor in the continent. The most efficient educational group became incorporated in 1985 as Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated and it is this institution that improved the scenario of education and training levels, which overcame racism, geographic isolation and cultural differences. The Commonwealth Government developed a national Indigenous education policy with the help of this educational association. In October, 1989, both Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated and the National Aboriginal
Education Committee launched a joint policy for the betterment of the education of the indigenous people in the Commonwealth State and Territory governments. But this joint policy came into effect only on 1 January, 1990.

In 1990, Joan Kirner, the Victorian Minister of Education and Mary Atkinson, President of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, signed a partnership agreement on Koorie Education. This partnership provided the framework for cross-sectoral co-ordination of Koorie Education Services from May, 1990. Even the Victorian Government adopted this education policy on Koorie Education for the social and economic development of not only the Koorie people but the Aborigines as a whole. The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated is now recognised by the Victorian Department of Education as the primary source of policy advice to the Minister of Education on all matters pertaining to Koorie Education. In December, 1991, the Institute of Koorie Education was established.

In February, 1997, the Minister for Education, Phil Gude and the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated President, Mary Atkinson, launched the Koorie 2000 policy—an innovative approach for education that provides Koorie people with greater involvement in educational decision-making and aims at improved educational outcomes for them.

Infact, this Koorie policy has changed their portrayal in the society. The Aborigines had to confront harsh reality to formulate and construct an identity in the society. As we know, identity construction and representation are closely linked for they both emerge out of a complex political matrix that determines the way in which individuals and groups construct, negotiate and defend their identity and/ or self-understanding.

When the interaction crosses the boundaries of social limitations, take for example, when a white marries an aborigine, the question of exact representation of these third kind of people that emerge from white and black interactions, comes into existence. Thus, the struggle for space and identity begins. Along with it many subtle conflicts start—ethnic, racial, cultural, and so on. And somewhere in this conflict, the
recognition of the identity of the inferior races, ethnicities, cultures, seems to get lost. Thus a battle for recognition and representation also begins. After such a struggle, the aborigines managed to get their own space and a recognition of their identity. This identity gave them the right to voice their exact feelings and emotions which came up while existing within a volatile environment.

Through veracity, the support of voicing their feelings and thoughts of how they were victimised and marginalised, the aboriginals started formulating their conditions in their writings. Thus, the literature dealing with the aboriginals came into existence gradually.

Aborigines have been represented in Australian literature, since the European settlement in this continent of Australia in 1788. The coincidence of Britain's seventeenth century colonial expansions and the explorations of the English voyagers lead to the first depiction of the continent in a written format. The encapsulation of the ambitious discoveries and voyages into the literary genre of biographical and autobiographical travelogues, was the first representation of this country and its indigenous inhabitants. Dampier's journals, published as A New Voyage Round The World (1689), described the Aborigines as 'the miserable People in the world'. Adam Ferguson upheld the colonising ideology of civilising the indigenous inhabitants in his An Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767), where he said that these people can be 'easily christianised and then civilised'.

Realism has been a dominant influence in Australian literature—the story of colonisation, voice of colonial experience, and confrontations with the 'natural inhabitants of the vast land'. Governor Arthur Phillip's The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay (1789) reflects these traits of the portrayal of the Aborigines. In his A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay (1789), Marine Captain Watkin Tench makes an independent response to this new world. His confrontations with the inhabitants of Australia are also portrayed in A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson (1793). He describes the Aborigines were the 'violent savage'. David Collins, in Account of the English Colony in New South Wales (2 Volumes# 1798-1802), indicated that the Aborigines and the settlers broke out into a spasmodic
violence. In 1825, Barron Field in his *Geographical Memoirs to New South Wales* (1825) also described them as the 'savage and uncivilised natives of the continent'.

One of the earliest portrayals of Aborigines and their culture is the anonymously-authored *Alfred Dudley: Or, The Australian Settlers* (1830). George Fletcher Moore's compiled and published work on their life - *A Descriptive Vocabulary of the Language in Common Use Amongst the Aborigines of Western Australia* (1842) - also reflects the Aboriginal life and culture. In *Tales of the Colonies: Or, The Adventures of an Emigrant* (1843), *The Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land* (1846), and *The Emigrant In Search of a Colony* (1851), Charles Rowcroft described the experiences of the settlers against the bushrangers and Aborigines. Thomas McCombie wrote a separate, concluding section, ‘Essay on the Aborigines of Australia’ in his *Arabin: Or, The Adventures of a Colonist in New South Wales* (1845). The two fictional works of the 1840s talking about the Aborigines were Alexander Harris's *The Emigrant Family: Or, The Story of an Australian Settler* (1849) and James Tucker's *Ralph Rashleigh*, written in 1840 but not published in full until 1952.

The black-white relationship has been critically dealt with in several works. Alexander Harris's *Settlers and Convicts: Or, Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labour in the Australian Backwoods* (1847) described the relationship of the white settlers and the Aborigines. G. H. Haydon's *Five Years' Experience in Australian Felix* (1846) and *The Australian Emigrant* (1854) include the Aboriginals but in a more fictitious manner. E. Llyod's *A Visit to the Antipoder with some Reminiscences of a Sojourn in Australia* (1846) is more of a psychological examination of the Aborigines. Catherine Helen Spence's *Clara Morison: A Tale of South Australia during the Gold Fever* (1854), and Henry Kingsley's *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* (1859) reflect on encounters with the Aborigines. Charles Harpur's *The Bushrangers: A Play, and Other Poems* (1853) contained:

"...the most satisfactory proof of the existence of the native genius of a high order, that has yet been offered to the public." [Bennett & Strauss: *The Oxford Literary History of Australia*, p. 50]  

In her *Gertrude the Emigrant: A Tale of Colonial Life* (1857) and *Cowanda, the Veteran's Grant* (1859), Louisa Atkinson was the first woman writer to write a
few lines on the 'natural inhabitants'. Mary Theresa Vidal's _Bengala: Or, Some Time Ago_ (1860) also writes about her feelings for these natives. George Gordon McCrae's _The Story of Balladeadro_ and _Mamba, the Bright-eyed: An Aboriginal Romance_, both published as monographs in 1867, is a depiction of Aboriginal life. He was inspired by his direct contact with the Aboriginal people. In his _Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes_ (1870), Adam Lindsay Gordon portrays the Aborigines with pure fervor.

W.A. Brodribb made numerous observations on the Aborigines in his _Recollections of an Australian Squatter_ (1883). E.M. Curr's _Recollection of Squattino in Victoria then Called the Port Phillip District (from 1841 to 1851)_ (1883) and George Darrell's _The Forlorn Hope_ (1879) and _The Sunny South_ (1883) gave a detailed study about aborigines but in a colorful way. George Fletcher Moore made an attempt to understand the _Aborigines in his Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia_ (1884). Richard Cannon compared the Aborigines with savage animals in his _Savage Scenes from Australia_ (1885).

John Phillip's _Reminiscences of Australian Early Life_ (1893), James Kirby's _Old Times in the Bush of Australia_ (1895), Thomas Bride's _Letters from Victorian Pioneers_ (1898) and Constance Campbell Petrie's _Tom Petrie's Reminiscences of Early Queensland_ (1904) contain many reflections on the Aborigines. Alfred William Howitt's _Native Tribes of Southeast Australia_ (1904) was the first scientific study of Aboriginal Social relationship. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen published works jointly, such as _The Native Tribes of Central Australia_ (1899), _The Northern Tribes of Central Australia_ (1904) and _The Arunta: A Study of a Stone Age People_ (1927). These works, which came at the beginning of the twentieth century, provided the impetus for extensive ethnological investigations into the Aboriginals.

In 1924, David Unaipon published _Aboriginals: Their Tradition and Customs_. This Ngarrindjeri speaker emphasised the intricate system of the Aboriginal society. He transformed Aboriginal spoken forms into Standard English written texts that culminated in the slim volume, _Native Legends_ (1929). W.R. Smith made an anthropological study through his _Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals_.


(1930). A.P. Elkin’s *The Australian Aborigines* (1938) was a work on the Aboriginal religion.

During the middle of the last century, fiction writers started including the Aborigines in their works. E.L. Grant Watson’s *The Desert Horizon* (1923) discussed the problems of accommodation, giving relative importance to the Aboriginal society. Vance Palmer’s *The Man Hamilton* (1928) dealt with the recognition of ‘half-caste’ or mixed race. Palmer’s *Men are Human* (1929) was another fiction on the same scope. Katharine Susannah Prichard’s *Coonardoo* portrayed the sensitive area of black-white sexual relationship. Mary Durack’s *Keep Them My Country* (1955), F.B. Vicker’s *The Mirage* (1955) Gavin Casey’s *Snowball* (1958), and Randolph Stow’s *To the Islands* (1958) were some of the novels dealing with the black-white relationship.

The starting point for the modern novel of social protest of the Aboriginals of Australia is Xavier Herbert’s *Capricornia* (1938). It explained the devastating rationalisations of the whites and their inhuman treatment towards the Aboriginals. Even T.A.G. Hungerford’s war novel, *The Ridge had the River* (1952), Nene Gare’s *The Fringe Dwellers* (1961) and Archie Weller’s *The Day of the Dog* (1981) also talk about discrimination and inhumane demarcations that the aboriginals had been victimised with.

Besides, there are lots of historical, sociological, political, ethnological and anthropological studies on the Aborigines of Australia. The establishment of Aboriginal Publications Foundation in 1971 published a magazine *Identity* that included publication of writings by and for Aborigines. Journals and magazines released every year by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission, like *Heat* and *Mercury*. This Commission also releases reports at regular intervals giving detailed accounts about the functionalities of the government. So people not only in Australia, but also around the world get the contemporary picture of the Aboriginal life and culture.

Whatever the present representation of reality, or the herculean task that the associations attached to the Aboriginal people do, the literary world, however, picturises the life and culture of these natives of Australia, which comes out of their creativity. Although fictitiously created, these literary creations take one to the pulse of reality through their marvellous vivacity. Whether Keneally’s *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, or Alexis Wright’s *Plains of Promise* or Sally Morgan’s *My Place*, all of these texts have this vividness of reality and the essence of Aboriginal life.