CHAPTER II

NATIVE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE
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This chapter charts the ways in which Canada's Native peoples have been written into and out of discourses of the nation-state causing a deep identity crisis in the vast number of indigenous people. People around the world envision Canada as a multicultural utopia, enabling equality for all. However it may be argued that the relationship that has developed over the last four hundred years' between the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal people in Canada has been built on the basis of false assumptions – that Canada was 'discovered' when the newcomers arrived from Europe, that the inhabitants were a wild, untutored people given to strange customs and ungodly practices, that they would in no time come to accept the 'superiority' of the strangers and adopt their ways or that they would otherwise be totally extinct as a race and survive only as a subject of anthropological study.

This chapter examines the nature of Aboriginal-White relations in Canada from a historical perspective and analyses the lives of the Native Canadians vis-a-vis the problem of identity. It examines the relationship from the perspective of differential values, assumptions and beliefs and shows how the racist ideology of the dominant discourse continues to have a negative impact on the Native peoples. An attempt has been made to pursue the connection between the key arguments, perspective and the theoretical linkages of the following points – colonialism in Canada, racism, nationalism, Canadian multiculturalism, loss of identity of the Native Canadians and their quest for rebuilding one.

A study of the history of Canada reveals the story of colonial violence, exploitation, deceit and imperialist dominance. Sometimes between 20,000 and 35,000 years ago, a group of people crossed the now submerged Siberia-Alaska land-bridge to migrate from Asia to America. They made North America their home and from 10,000 B.C., started settling permanently along the pacific coast of present-day British Columbia. Long before the White men set foot on the American soil, the Indians, or rather the Native Americans have been living here. When the Europeans came here, there was probably a population of about 10 million Indians. The name “Indian” was first supplied to them by Columbus, who believed mistakenly that the mainland and the islands of America were parts of the Indies, in Asia. So when the Europeans arrived in the 16th and 17th
century, they were met by the native Americans.

The Natives regarded that the White complexioned visitors as something of a marvel, not only for their outlandish dress and beards and winged ships, but even more for their wonderful technology - steel knives and swords, cannons and so on. However, conflicts eventually arose. As a starter, the arriving Europeans seemed attuned to another world, who appeared to be oblivious to the rhythms and spirit of nature. Nature, to the Europeans - and the Indians, differed widely. To the Europeans, nature also was a commodity: a forest was so meant board feet of timber, a beaver colony, so many pelts, a herd of buffalo so many robes and tongues. Even the Indians themselves were a resource - souls ripe for the Jesuit Dominican or Puritan planning. It was the Europeans' cultural arrogance, coupled with their materialistic view of the land, its animals and the plant beings, that the Indians found repellent.

The Europeans were seen as soulless creatures who wielded diabolically ingenious tools and weapons to accomplish mad ends. They kept on arriving as many "as stars in the heaven". They considered the Indians to be nomads with no interest to claim land-ownership. In the conflicts the Indians were at a great disadvantage because of their modest number, lack of advanced weapons and unwillingness to cooperate, even in their own defence. Moreover, the Europeans brought with them contagious diseases, such as small pox and in no time the disease played havoc on the indigenous people who were reduced to minority population by 1885. They lost their land, language and culture. They were reduced to a people without a history. Terry Goldie makes an observation in ‘An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English’ as she says, ‘Like the irony of that old joke that when the missionaries came they had the bibles and the Native peoples the land, and now the Native peoples have the bibles and the white people have the land.”

Terry Goldie's observation explains how in the course of colonisation the Aboriginal peoples were alienated from their culture, from their religion and their land, and thus, from their roots. This was done from the assumption of 'civilising' the Indian tribes, because Christianity was thought to be the other name of civilisation. Christian church supported the systematic annihilation of aboriginal values, norms, religions and language. The Jesuit and other missionaries, who believed that Aboriginal peoples should not be left in their “inferior” natural state, considered it their duty to replace the aboriginal cultures
with Christian beliefs, and values. And by doing so the White man performed his duty to the red man. There was general agreement that the propagation of Christianity entitled the Europeans to intervene in the lives of the Aboriginal peoples and to exercise force if situation demanded, to achieve this end. It was done to evangelise the Indians.

The Empire had several agencies such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, The Hudson Bay Company and the ubiquitous priest. Of these the priest was the most resilient in terms of the power he could wield. In Fear and Temptation, Terry Goldie explains how the phrase “I possess truth”, was instrumentalised to impose dehumanising violence on the indigenous population. The priest made his way into the indigenous belief system with so much purposeful steadiness that even before the Natives could know about it, they became a part of his world. There is no denying the fact that some Natives held him in high esteem. But as an embodiment of power, his authority generated a deep resentment which finds expression in different ways such as satires. In Halfbreed (1979) Maria Campbell describes a middle-aged priest who came to hold masses at mealtimes. After stuffing himself with sufficient food he rubbed his belly and smiled. Maria’s great grandma Cheechum however taught her that God lived in her and so not to “worry about him floating around in a beard and white clothes.”

In the Royal Proclamation of 1763, King George 3rd instructed his colonial governments to ensure that the Aboriginal peoples were not disturbed in their lands. The Aboriginal-White relation was based on the principle that the Indians were regarded as British subjects and were also recognised as autonomous political units capable of having treaty relations with the Crown. The second principle acknowledged that aboriginal nations were entitled to the territories in their possession unless and until they ceded them to others. But in reality, the colonial government appeared to have no interest to counter the illegal occupation of the lands of the indigenous population. Encroachment became more common and the colonial economic base witnessed a shift in attitude regarding its declining interest in fur-trade. Emphasis on agriculture grew higher at that time. As a result within a very short time the Natives were displaced and dislocated from their lands.

Confronted with a powerful and growing colonial society, the strength of aboriginal notions declined. Thus the European settlers took the advantage of
the belief system that judged the original inhabitants as inferior which was further strengthened by the scientific theories of Social Darwinism that rested ultimately on ethnocentric and racist premises. The state of landlessness created a void in the Native mind. It created a feeling of severing all ties with their roots. The Natives believe that they do not simply live on the land but are made from the land. This has been argued by Paula Gunn Allen as she says 'We are the land.' She distinguishes this relational sense of self from that of the "nature lover", often a characteristic feature of the Western culture. She says 'It is not a matter of being close to nature.' The relationship is more one of identity.

By connecting oneself to the land of one's ancestors, a connection to one's self is possible. The land of the ancestors is an integral part of the individual's life and that is why land becomes an important constitutive element in the course of constructing identity, personal as well as national. The Native's bonding with land on the other hand, is not associated with the exalted romance of the sentimental "nature lovers" nor is it inspired by any self-conscious appreciation. To a native, it is rather a fact he has known from his infancy, a fact that extends long roots into all the basic aspects of his being. For example, Connie Fife, the Cree poet from Saskatchewan in Speaking Through Jagged Rock (1992) explains how she has been shaped by mountains. She states that she regards herself not only as emanating from the land, but that she has become a poetic mouthpiece for the mountains, rivers and landscapes. She says that she is a people made of red clay, shaped by the land of mountain and coloured by the voice of the prairie wind.

Peoples' identification with particular land is essential for the cultivation of an awareness of national identity. Commonly held sets of symbolic meanings about places have often been developed to reinforce peoples' identification with specific social values. They become iconic. Such places include landscapes, and sites where commemorations are performed. Geography, locale, place are important strategies of cultural revival. Land is defined by tangible material realities that can be seen, mapped or located and it is through individual practice within the culturally defined space identity is formed. It shows that the individual belongs to the place and is comfortable within the space, because part of how one defines oneself is symbolised by certain features of the land. Thus the continuity of peoples' connections with their lived-in worlds reinforces
their identification with time and place and each other.

When these long-standing localisms are replaced by the centralised and homogenised processes of state-politics, it creates a tremendous void in the minds of those who suffer form it. This has happened exactly to the Native Canadians. As a race they have become homeless in their homeland, because the history of Canada witnesses racism in all forms - individual, systemic and ideological.

From the 16th century onwards one can trace the connection between the formation of the English nation and the articulation of the Anglo-Saxon race. Canada was no exception. Unlike all new nations Canadian dilemma of identity has persisted for over a century since Canada acquired its autonomous status as a confederate country in the year 1867. The pre-confederation history of Canada is the history of a colonised culture. The colonial experience gave birth to ambiguity and ambivalence regarding the self and the other. In one sense the country wanted to celebrate the new reality and on the other the simultaneous nostalgia for the mother country stood as an impediment. Since the initial immigration population was largely from the British isles, ties with England were deep rooted. It is significant to note at this juncture that although Canada became free from the British Empire in 1867, it was only in 1965 that Canada replaced the Union Jack and adopted her own Maple Leaf Flag. Moreover the French Canadian province Quebec, because of its special status granted by the constitution, has diagonally divided Canada into two distinctly separate Canadas, the English and the French. Canada is often cited as a model democracy and is known for its large size under a federal system with vast demographic diversities. It is also known as a French / English bilingual country. Canada’s bilingualism is rooted in its colonial history. Hence the issues of ethnic harmony and cultural diversities are closely related to the working of bilingualism in Canada.

The French and the British colonial powers had been vying for colonies all over the world for several hundred years. In the early 16th century, French pioneers came to the northeast coast of North America and reached New France (today’s Quebec) a century later. In the mid 17th century, British colonist began to enter North America, including eastern Canada. By the late 17th century North America became a place of collision between two colonial powers.

The British ‘assimilation policy’ - namely to eliminate anything French
met with a strong resistance from the French. Faced with these circumstances, the British changed the policy to an ‘inclusion’ policy, that is, to allow the existence and promotion of French culture, language and so forth. This was the inception of Canada’s bilingualism. The linguistic duality ultimately divide the province of Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada.

Canada is a land of ethnic diversity and immigrants with a plurality of cultures and languages. However, the federal government fails to develop its policies regarding its commitments to multi-culturalism, apparently fearing its implications for the French / English relationship. There is an evident lack of emphasise on the promotion of aboriginal languages and the third languages which are termed as “heritage languages”. Because it was simply assumed that all other language groups were to assimilate to either of the two principal languages.

However, the attempts to repress language minorities resulted in widespread social and political conflicts. The constitutional arrangements for recognising the equal status of the English and French language communities are inadequate to deal with the collective language rights. This has left the Canadian linguistic communities caught in the demographic and linguistic trends of assimilation and territorial separation.

In *Oppositional Aesthetics : Reading from a Hyphenated Space*, Arun Mukherjee opens up a reading of South Asian Canadian texts as an oppositional discourse to the dominant ideology of literary and cultural analysis. She maintains –

> “*The hyphenated Canadians, as those of us, who are not from the ‘two founding nations’, have challenged their otherisation by the unitary notions of national identity and asserted that being ‘different’ by no means equates with being un-Canadian.*”

The ethnic voices challenge this notion of the Canadian culture and raise their voices against their purposeful exclusion from the national imaginary. As a result, from among the various points that go on to form the famous Canadian multicultural mosaic, the one component that has become perhaps the most turbulent site of contest is the status occupied by the First Nations of Canada. They consider their indigenism to be the instrument to support and defend their claims to nationalism. Despite their being the First Nations the Native Canadians are the victims of a hostile state machinery. They become the
trapped victims of stereotypical definitions of belonging. Inspite of the historical and contemporary evidence of racism as a pervasive and intractable reality in Canada, the dominant discourse insists on casting an illusory spell that often tends to ignore the harsh reality of a society divided by colour and ethnicity.

Canada suffers from historical amnesia and its institutions function in a state of collective denial. Racist beliefs and practices although widespread and persistent, are frequently invisible to everyone but to those who suffer from it. The particular racist assertion of a pre-supposed European superiority in Canada took a variety of forms, where perceptions ranged from that of the Indians as a race destined to be wiped out due to their primitive ways of life to that of a race who could be posited as opposed to the 'cultured' European self. The Indians were perceived as weak and feminised objects.

Tutelage, therefore, becomes the overriding ambition of the Canadian official policy vis-a-vis the Indians. The binary polarisation into 'we' and 'they' is framed in the context of an examination of the relative values of the two peoples. The discourse of 'otherness' is supported by stereotypical images which have little basis in reality. These negative images nevertheless have a very significant social impact. The victims have no power to produce or disseminate the real and a positive image in the public domain and these stereotypes increase their vulnerability in terms of social, economic and political participation in the mainstream Canadian society. Thus the definition of 'civilisation' and 'barbarism' rests on the production of an irreconcilable difference between self and other. These images often appear to coincide with the construction of the 'other' in colonialist discourse.

The fact that the Europeans who travelled across the globe always carried a certain pre-conceived ideas about the people they were expected to encounter, simply necessitated the continuity of these negative images. For example the 12th and 13th century image of a Muslim as a barbaric, tyrannical and promiscuous seems identical with the orientalist image Edward Said identifies in Orientalism. He describes how the 'relationship between the Orient and Orientalist was essentially hermeneutical.' Texts, bureaucrats, academics-all became integrated into this structure of incorporation by hermeneutics. Said's Orientalism seems to be applicable to Canada's First Nations history and experience. The same regime of political, sociological, military, ideological and
imaginative actors that was involved in structuring the Orient was involved in structuring the new world also.

The Native Canadians have been thus the victims of group prejudice. Muzaffer Sherif explains it in *An Outline of Social Psychology* in this way – 'Group prejudice may be characterised as the negative attitude of members of one group toward another group and its members.' He explains how the negative features of prejudice is demonstrated in terms of the social distance where the members of a prejudiced group hold against another group and its members in relation to themselves. A majority of the members identify themselves closely with the standardised values of their group that gets a spontaneous social approval. It is however, no wonder, that the prejudiced group hardly has any significant contact with people against whom the prejudice is directed.

Group prejudice thus is an attitude based on lack of information and lack of contact with the group in question. The concept of social distance which defines the position of one group in relation to other groups, according to Sherif, is not built up on the basis of factual experiences or objective knowledge. It is a necessary derivative of the individual's membership in his group.

Beatrice Culleton in her *In Search of April Raintree* portrays this phenomenon. The novel seeks to foreground the role of the coloured body with its ramifications for identity formation in a society where one has to defend one's identity everyday to people who are less informed or misinformed. The situation becomes evident in a conversation that takes place between a white lady and the protagonist. "Oh, I've read about Indians. Beautiful people they are. But you're not exactly Indians are you? What is the word for people like you?" one asked. "Women", Cheryl replied instantly. "No, no, I mean nationality?" "Oh, I am sorry. We're Canadians", Cheryl said smiling sweetly.

The ideology of discrimination does not always refer to political ideas alone. It includes the mental framework, one's belief and one's way of expressing one's relationship to the world. Generally an ideology reflects the interest of the dominant social class. The belief is so strong that it impels the victims not to rebel against their situation. This is how the Natives in Canada have internalised a sense of inferiority. The white dominant discourse has succeeded partially in transmitting the idea of their inferior status to the
Indians. The Gramscian notion of hegemony put stress on the transformation of ideas and practices by the empowered to the ones who are dominated. Gramsci observes that subjectivity and ideology are absolutely central to the process of domination. The ‘willing’ submission to being ruled leaves the Native people divided in themselves.

Howard Adams explains to Hartmut Lutz in an interview how the Natives in Canada ‘have been colonised and alienated from who they are, being made to feel ashamed of themselves through school, and church and all these factors.’ This explains why the construction and contestation of the Canadian nation-state become problematic. The mosaic of Canada’s social paradigm still remains unrepresented. Canada has been a complex, plural society comprised of a multitude of historical influences, regional patterns and ethnic collectivities. Within this, historically, nation building was oriented towards the construction of a British type of society. The attempts by other groups to maintain their own language and culture to build their identity seems to threaten the Eurocentric model of cultural unity sought-for in the country. The discourse of imperialism has provided the rationale for the Euro-Canadian society to meddle, violate and destroy the social fabric and the philosophy of life of the increasingly marginalised Indian population. It implies a complete change in customs and the Indians’ whole way of life so that they can be assimilated within the framework of modern Canada. While doing so, the entire scheme rather deliberately ignores the fact that all these professed intentions are founded upon a sustained devaluation of the Indian, - both at the personal as well as social level that go hand in hand with a tacit valorisation and creation of a privileged image of the Euro-Canadian system of values.

The idea of white supremacy hangs over like a great mist. The source of this domination is undoubtedly the whites’ imperialistic achievements among the people of colour. Nationhood becomes the invention of one’s consciousness, and what follows is a recreation of the exclusive construct of nationhood as belonging to a specific region, culture and tradition into a fluid state that accommodates revision and extension. One can not erase the colonial imprint on the consciousness of its abject subjects. Nationness is re-aligned and re-modified by history. Influences which are outside of the subject initially undergo a process of internalisation that subjectifies the self to the otherness of the self’s own history. "In education, in legislation, in books ranging from the
Nationalism is not a natural phenomenon, nor is it a product of eternal and natural laws. It rather stands, according to Cox (1948), for the collective attitude for capitalist aggression and exploitation of other people. It is therefore, considered to be a product of the growth of social and intellectual factors at a certain stage of history. The protection of the supremacy of the peoples' spiritual, inner domain of culture can not be identified as the base for nation-building. A heroic past, its glory and victory of the ancestors again is a contested field because 'traditions' are continuously being invented and re-invented by the nationalists and the colonialists as well. But Cox says, 

"nationalism is more than the emotional set of a people in international competitive struggle; it is particularly an exploitative, socio-psychological instrument of actual or potential ruling classes; and it seeks its principal support and effective expression in an organised capitalist state. The more nationalistic a people, the more secure the state, which is always at the service of the ruling class especially. Therefore the propagation and intensification of nationalism becomes the indispensable duty of the ruling class; and when, as a ruling people, whites find themselves among the people of coloured, their nationalism tends to be exclusive. Should counter-nationalism arise, there will be conflict on the spot."

When Benedict Anderson argues that "Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship", he pays all his attention to who is included in the communities and ignores to consider those who are excluded and marginalised. These exclusions make the nation incapable of successfully speaking on behalf of all the people. It is in this backdrop of a persistent policy of negation that one needs to look at Canada's policy of multiculturalism. The original idea was to ensure that immigrants and others preserve their cultures and that different cultures interact peacefully within one nation. More political than social, this pluralistic idea of transculturalism, that is seeing oneself in the other, has a more interactive approach. Multiculturalism implies "culture within culture" – the notion of which was popularised later with a view to recognise all Canadians as equal partners in the Canadian society.

One of the visions that multiculturalism holds, is the possibility of people
from various cultures with different beliefs and histories living together peacefully. Within this diversity, it is assumed that everyone holds a common set of fundamental values, which ensures that old people are valued equally. The philosophy of multiculturalism was first officially expressed in the mid 1960s, when the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism was formed. It addressed the rights of the French-speaking people, in what was predominantly English-speaking, ethnically ‘English’ Canada. According to the Commission, the French language and culture were to be valued and legally supported, as well as the diverse cultural heritages of Canada. This multicultural policy was first adopted in 1971, and became a law in 1982.

Multiculturalism promotes gaining an understanding of people from all cultures, despite language, religious beliefs, political and social views, or national origins. It does not require people to shed their own values and beliefs, in order to accept one another. Instead, multiculturalism acknowledges that there are many ways in which the world can be viewed and lived in. Multiculturalism essentially promotes respect for people’s distinct cultural identity, while ensuring that common Canadian values are upheld. This assumption leads to the spontaneous query as to what values and beliefs the Canadians holding common. Basically these values have been defined through the history of Canada, particularly through British and French traditions.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Constitution are the two main documents of legislation that outline the basic values of Canadian society. But they failed to represent the interest and ideals of all Canadians. For example, the Aboriginal people have been struggling to define their Aboriginal Rights, as they are entrenched in the Canadian Constitution, as a means to acknowledge that their rights do not stem from Canadian Law, but, rather from their pre-existing rights as Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people have a unique place in the Canadian geo-political landscape. They are apart of the nation by the fact that their ancestors lived in this country when it was formed. They did not “choose” to live here, rather, they were made a part of the nation by association. This is the reason why the Aboriginal people often prefer to be referred to as “First Nations” because the term serves to identify them as having a unique historical connection to the land, being the first people to live here, - thousands of years before the arrival of the non-Aboriginal settlers.
Despite there being the original inhabitants of the land, the Aboriginal peoples are still not part of the Canadian mosaic because they are treated as the wards of the government, leaving in the reserves and hence segregated from the society. Event though the government has recognised the Aboriginal peoples as having a distinct separate identity, yet the Aboriginal’s lack of having ownership over enough land prohibits them from defining their rights and what their traditional territory is.

Explaining the term ‘multiculturalism’ CW Watson holds that there is a notion of distinctiveness of each culture, each separate from each other. This concept implies more than a static cultural mosaic – it claims to recognise, even encourage interaction among diverse identities. But no matter how vociferously the state of Canada declares its official policy of creating a mosaic, the governmental proclamation can not conceal the bitter history that the Native peoples are still victims of racial discrimination.

The Government of Canada tells Canadians the story of a multicultural, integrated and inclusive citizenship and people around the world envision Canada as a multicultural utopia. However it may be noted that official Canadian multiculturalism excludes the contemporary Native worldviews and focuses on stereotypical Native cultures as central to Canadian history. Neil Bissondath examines the situation and says:

‘multiculturalism, with all its festivals and its celebrations, has done and can do nothing to foster a factual and clear-minded vision of our neighbours. Depending on stereotype, ensuring that ethnic groups will preserve their distinctiveness in a gentle way, it has done little more than lead an already divided country down the path to further divisionness.’

Bissondath’s much anticipated ‘social divisionness’ gains momentum through the creation of various categories of ‘others’. The nation-state acts here as an arbitrator.

By providing a justification for dispossessing lands of colonised people, the creation of a stable ‘other’ has held to maintain this relationship of inequity. In Canada, the stereotype of a ‘traditional Indian’ conjures up images of moccasins, beads, canoe etc. Traditional anthropology depicted the colonised as members of a harmonious, internally homogenous and unchanging culture. When so described the culture appeared to need progress. In addition, the timeless traditional culture served as a self-congratulatory reference point
against which western civilization could measure its own progressive historical
evolution.

In *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism
and Gender* (2000), Himani Bannerji, one of the senior most teachers in an
Ontario university draws from her experiences as a teacher the myth of the
happy Canadian multicultural family thus – ‘Even after years of being an
immigrant and upon swearing allegiance to the same Queen of England from
which India has parted, I was not to be a Canadian.’ \(^{19}\) Himani Bannerji
represents the voice of the peoples outside the mainstream and her statement
shows the gap between the discourse of the centre (Anglophone and
Francophone culture) and the discourses of the margin. Gayatri Spivak says “In
the multiculturist struggle, the use of the ‘culture’ is comparable to Foucault’s
use of ‘power’. It is a name that one lends to a complex strategic situation in a
particular society” (*A Critique of Postcolonial Reason Toward a History of the
Vanishing Present*). \(^{20}\)

Foucault describes his use of the word ‘power’ in the following way “One
needs to be nominalistic, no doubt, power is not an institution, and not a
structure, neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with, it is the name
that one lends (pre^ter) to a complex strategical situation in a particular
society.” \(^{21}\) The multiculturists in Canada generally use the word ‘culture’ where
the scholarly definitions of culture do not hold water. The major problem lies in
the rhetoric that the Whites expect everybody to be more like them.

Although multiculturalism sounds egalitarian that defines Canadian
culture by its tolerance for the other cultures that make it up, it is still racist.
Canada basically follows the European values and customs, while still allowing
others to celebrate their cultures in a formalised way. These celebrations
showcase historic traits such as food, clothing, music, language etc. They are
taken out on special occasions but afterwards they are put back, and everyone
returns to the usual Euro-Canadian customs. Multiculturalism thus recognises
diversity superficially. The underlying assumption to most Euro-Canadians is
that Canada is still ‘white’. The overall effect of multiculturalism is to neutralise
claims of special groups by making everyone the same or equal in present day
British-Canada or French-Quebec.

Stereotypes play an important role in perpetuating this view. The
construction of the ‘other’ has helped to maintain *whiteness, white privilege* and
its *invisibility*. The construction of static, primitive and dark images are used to elevate the status of the whites and define them as not the 'other'. The goodness and dynamic nature of 'whiteness' is inferred but not overtly stated. The privileges that accompany 'whiteness' is assumed to be the normal consequence of not being the 'other'. This invisibility of whiteness is historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and linked to relations of domination and power.

However there seems to be an urge to deny that racism exists in Canada. Emma LaRoque expresses her fear as she says:

*An area of growing concern to me is a very common practice of blaming Native peoples for their socio economic conditions. Blaming “forgets” that racism has also been institutionalised in governmental policies of assimilation, paternalism and the historical and continuing confiscation of Native lands and resources. These policies have had a devastating impact on native peoples but the fall out has been explained away as stemming from “cultural differences”. In turn “cultural differences” are reduced to stereotypes such as “Indians can’t or won’t adjust to city life”. In other words Indian “culture” rather than colonisation or racism is blamed for whatever has happened to Native peoples. [2]

Racism in Canada has started making news of late, which has also shocked some Canadians to know that they have been apartheists. Howard Adams in an interview to Harmut Lutz explains how the Canadians are ashamed not because of their being racist, but because their racism has been exposed to the world. He says *'May be because you feel that you are being seen for what you really are. The world sees you, and you don’t like the picture that the world is seeing of you. So psychologically you are really disturbed about it.'* [3] Howard Adam’s comment reflects how the colonial hegemony of the Canadian nation-state is responsible for the racial discriminations. That is the reason why any question of cultural identity of the First Nations is inevitably reduced to the level of racial identity where the Indians remain not a cultural but a racial subject. Despite the age-old discrimination along racial lines, the Anglo-Canadian nation-state escapes the stigma of being an official apartheid-sponsoring country only because of its adoption of multicultural policy.

Himani Bannerji observes how the *“moral carrot of multicultural love is quickly followed by a stick”* [4] in Canada. It can be considered as an instrument
of the ideological state apparatus. She finds Charles Taylor's and Anderson's concept of nation-making as an expression of civil society, as a collective form of self-determination and definition to be a romantic idea. Because, it presents a picture where culture, community, tradition and immigration play an important role. But Canada is more than a duel mono-cultural entity. It has too many different 'others', a whole range of different cultural identities, that can not be given equal status with the English and the French. All that the whites can do is to tolerate the 'others' despite their differences. "Here difference is not a simple marker of cultural diversity, but rather, measured or constructed in terms of distance from civilising European cultures. Difference here is branded always with inferiority or negativity."^^

People of colour who refuse to accept folklorisation of their cultures and demand to express their own cultural identities, are excluded from citizenship in the eyes of many Canadians. They are redefined as "special" or the "problematic Canadian" because they do not conform to the expected norms of 'whiteness'. The Winnipeg Free Press says: By what rights do Aboriginal people (and immigrants) receive services and demand rights when they are unwilling to contribute to the nation ? ^6

Perhaps the hegemonic role of the Canadian governmental policy is nowhere more apparent then in the formulation of the education programme. An attempt has been made here to analyse the role of education in producing and reproducing social bias and inequality. It focuses on the ways in which racism is reflected in the learning environment. It continues to form an intrinsic part of the learning process with the educational institutions. One of the key assumptions of many educators is that children enter school as "blank slates" with few preconceived ideas and beliefs. But even at that stage they have already been exposed to racially constructed images of social relations. White children make friends with Whites and typically show negative attitude towards children of colour. The racist culture, which includes racist images and negative stereotypes of the people of colour in films, television, books and toys has a strong influence on the children's attitudes and perceptions. When they grow up they deepen their understanding of the status associated with particular groups. The social environment and the daily experiences of children communicate both implicit and explicit messages.

The manifestations of racism in Canada is found to be present in the
educational curriculum. In this context it is imperative to know how and what type of knowledge is imparted and also how knowledge is transmitted. The issue of bias in the classics has become a matter of concern in Canada now. Reading literary texts without being prepared to deal with the hidden racist suggestions cause damage to the minority students, who are further marginalised by the racial language, images and the ideas of the texts. The texts gets contextualised in passage of time, and this is why the perceptions, assumptions and understanding that the student brings to the reading of the text is of equal importance. The bias in the classics and the Euro-centrism that permeates other texts and teaching materials have an impact on the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of the minority students. In the “Race Consciousness” of a South Asian Academic, Arun Mukherjee reflects her experiences as a non-white student who had never been exposed to a book by a non-white writer as part of the curriculum during her entire education in English literature both in Canada and India. She says:

“I try to look back on those days of my studenthood and reconstruct what I thought about the absence of non-white authors in the curriculum. I think again and again of the all-white American Literature courses that I was taught ..... and my unproblematic acceptance of their normalcy. I realise now the power of the teacher as authority figure. My teachers made the racist, exclusionary curriculum normal for me. They made it normal by convincing me that the curriculum was composed of the ‘best’ works ever written by ‘man’.”

As a South Asian teacher, Mukherjee takes up the challenging job to teach her students to stop applying western norm and values to be true for all times and all places. This “fake universalism” according to Mukherjee, does not allow one to have an encounter with the complexity of the cultural diversity of the world. She believes that a change can happen only when “Canadian schools teach about all Canadians.”

Racism in the curriculum manifests itself in subjects such as history, social studies, geography and science also. The perspectives of writers who reflect the history and experiences of the non-Western cultures are generally ignored in the European curriculum. History in its text book form presents people with a system of values disguised as a natural and transcendent process of cultural development.
The history curriculum often exhibits a dominant culture bias where one finds the reflection of the perception of those who tell the story, describe the events and interpret them. As a result the history of people of colour typically begins when the Whites ‘discover’ them. The Natives hardly have any control over this misrepresentation of their status. Human civilisation is portrayed as an evolutionary process, in which the European culture – its legal system, democratic forms of government and a capitalist economy is considered to be the best culture in the world. This perspective is manifested in the learning resources, which often fails to reflect alternative views. Ranajit Guha terms it as ‘statism’ that authorises the dominant values of the state to determine the criteria of the historic. That is why the common sense of history is guided by a sort of statism which thematises and evaluates the past for it. The institutionalisation of the study of history, according to Guha, is used as a means to propagate the statist hegemony of culture.

“It speaks to us in the commanding voice of the state which by presuming to nominate the historic for us leaves us with no choice about our own relation to the past. Yet the narratives which constitute the discourse of history are dependent precisely on such choice. To choose means, in this context, to try and relate to the past by listening to and conversing with the myriad voices in civil society. These are small voices which are drowned in the notes of statist commands. That is why we don’t hear them.”

George L Cornell feels it is high time the Aboriginal people assume ownership over their stories so that they do not lose “control of their history” and “become products of another culture’s imagination.” At the level of the school and university, science classes also provide opportunities for fostering racism in the classroom. A specific example of bias in the science curriculum is the study of the theories of race that legitimises and provides justification of the superiority of the White race.

Racial stereotyping goes back to the Greek and Roman periods which was reworked in medieval and the colonial periods. Christianity became the parameter and the world was to be judged from that perspective. But ironically the Bible holds that all human beings were descended from the same parents, therefore the concept of ‘savagery’ and ‘barbarism’ remains unexplained to the logical mind. Scientific discussions, moreover, extended and developed the
concept of racism by attributing racial characteristics to biological differences such as skull and brain sizes, or gene. Science also insists on the authenticity of the connection between these factors of social and cultural attributes allowing terms like ‘savagery’ look like fixed and permanent features. The notion has got recognition to such an extent that Nations are often regarded as an expression of biological and racial attributes. Sometimes of course, nations are imagined as composed of many races, but at other times the very idea of nationhood develops by excluding the racial others, such as the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The connections between the formation of the English nation and the articulation of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race has been instrumental here.

There is no wonder that the Eurocentric curriculum is engaged in reproducing racism in education with a single minded attention. It produces a hierarchial culture in the campus. There is hardly any difference between what one experiences as Indians on the street and the treatment one gets in the campus. It is often through the school’s hidden curriculum that the hegemony of racism is established. The most powerful example of the hidden curriculum are the attitudes and practices of educators in the classroom. Unfortunately, there is little or no wrong with the learner in the beginning but the wrong lies with the method through which the learner is taught. For instance the Aboriginal children are often beaten or starved for speaking their mother tongue in the school. In fact, students who spoke in a dialect are likely not to understand or respond to the classroom activities. This confines them to a passive role that induces helplessness. Sometimes the dynamic of race creates enormous resistance in the classroom that are again controlled by teachers who are already committed to certain preconceived ideas. The evaluation system, therefore, tends to become highly subjective. The Native children are constantly being made to feel embarrassed for being Indians. The newly admitted children’s heads are checked up for lice and their hair is shaved off on the pretext of health and hygiene. Access to and control over the body of the dominated is a sure sign of domination of the oppressor. This has been evident, particularly in instances of racial domination practiced all over the world through times immemorial.

Agnes Grant makes an observation in ‘Abuse and Violence : April Raintree’s Human Rights (if she had any)’—‘Hair was a particular preoccupation
of European colonisers; dominant groups have long performed rituals which involve shearing the hair of subordinates. Cutting hair is found to be a key part of rituals of cross-cultural domination all over the world.' Thus the Native’s self-regarding sentiment depends on the complex interactions that the individual experiences with the hostile society he lives in.

The idea of self and self-regarding sentiment are essentially social products and their growth depends on interplay between personalities and the society. The child’s self-consciousness is nourished and moulded by the reflection of himself that he finds in the minds of his fellows. On the other hand, negative self-feeling is evoked by the awareness of a power greater than one’s own. For example, the Indians who grow up in the frightful environment of the residential schools, have been meticulously tutored to despise every aspect of their culture.

The loss of memory is enforced to perpetuate the hegemony of the White Canadian domination that corroborates with the ideological State Apparatuses of Althusser. Identity development is a complex task for all adolescents, but it seems to be particularly complicated for adolescents belonging to ethnic groups. Due to their membership in an ethnic group, they face an additional problem regarding the construction of a balanced identity in the mainstream society. Because ethnicity refers to a specific characteristic feature of a shared cultural tradition, and a heritage that persists across in generations.

Ethnic identity is an affiliative construct and the affiliation can be influenced by racial, natal, symbolic and cultural factors. But the most significant feature of ethnic identity lies in the genuine association of one’s personal identification with a communal one. Ethnic identification can be defined as a real awareness of self within a specific group. Identity thus can not be separated from the cultures which build and structure it. When caught between two cultures, the adolescent faces an emotional turbulence. He even starts despising his Native origin.

Henri Tajfel (Social identity and Intergroup Relations, 1982) maintains that one’s social identity strongly influences one’s self-perception. The strength and weakness of the self is largely determined from one’s status with one’s reference groups and how one assesses outgroup members. The constant exercise of repressive authority on the Natives in the academic institutions leads to an incapability of self-assessment. On occasions it leads to incidents such as
school drop-outs, violence, addiction to drugs and alcohol. Only a few learners
in whom the instinct of self-assertion is strong, work their way up the ladder. In
situations like this the Native community plays a very significant role. It makes
the individual realise that he is an integral part of the community and that the
community of which he is a part, has a capacity for collective suffering and
collective prosperity.

Nowhere on earth do people live regularly in isolated families. Everywhere territorial propinquity, supported by diverse other bonds unite a few families into a larger social group where all the members maintain a face-to-face relationship with one another. Since it is mainly through face-to-face relations that a person’s behaviour is influenced by his fellows – motivated, rewarded, punished, - the community holds primary seat of social control. Through the operation of social sanctions, ideas and norms, the community becomes preserver of the local culture. However, the idea that the current globalisation tendency in the world will destroy local culture, is gaining momentum. The paradox between localisation and globalisation has already become visible in major parts of the world in many different ways.

There is an on-going search for cultural authenticity, which is evident in the need to preserve minor languages, uphold particularisms, admire cultural self-sufficiency and national traditions. On the other hand through the spread of a uniform world culture, Globalisation seems to persist as an extremely strong tendency making the situation more paradoxical. Modern technological societies have generated a trans-national, composite and a mass culture with its own language, the linguistic imprint of which is universally being felt.

C.W. Watson observes how the distinctive ways of lives of the ethnic groups are fast disappearing as a consequence of globalisation. "Multiculturalism in terms of diversity and difference appears then to be under threat from global convergence." He holds the changes in consumption patterns throughout the world to be responsible for bringing changes in moral values. "With increasing pressure to obtain the means for oneself to be able to live the desired new lifestyle comes a diminishing interest in taking responsibility for others. Putting it crudely, there is a fear of a shift from the community and family-centred values."

However, the threat to the nation, to nationalisation of localisation, does not primarily come from globalisation, rather sometimes, the threat comes from
within the nation itself. One can remember several such well-known ruptures, such as Canada, Belgium, Spain, or in former countries such as U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. All over the world, a growing number of severe political and ethnic conflicts have arisen. Issues related to culture and cultural identity have become a very important phenomenon and will stay so for a long time. Important distinctions between peoples are not very often ideological, political or economic, but cultural. The globalisation is a force mainly driven by technological and economic flows in one form or another, while the localisation tendency is based on cultural identity.

In most parts of the world, such as in countries like Canada, the cultural borders no longer coincide with national borders. Therefore, without an interest in and an understanding of the major differences and the striking similarities between cultures, no adequate construction can be made of the nation-state of Canada or of groups of people within the nation-state. Because, in Hofstede's words "Everybody looks at the world from behind the windows of a cultural home."

In a world dominated by the white values, the Canadian Aboriginal struggles hard to create his "cultural home". Thus confrontation with the dominant culture, the loss of faith and finally coming back to the roots for a complete revival of faith – all are within the circular journey of the individual’s life. The circle has a very important significance in a Native's quest for an identity because it connects the individual's past to his future. Thus it appears that the Canadian Aborigines are realising that their ancestors influence their lives. To gain understanding and perhaps to add structure and meaning to their lives, many of them are searching for the long lost records of their social histories. And from the discovery, one constructs a symbolic identity. To soothe the tormented self, the native individual is constantly trying to explore his rich cultural heritage, the myths, the legends, the shamans and the trickster images. It makes the stance clear that to understand a native individual one is to view him as embedded in historical context. Ethnicity is a means in today's world for disadvantaged groups to claim a set of rights and privileges which the existing power structures have denied them.
Notes and References


8. In Canada, more than 30 of the world's principal languages are used by various ethnic groups.


10. First Nations is the name by which the different 'Indian' tribes have been cloistered together. These people have a unique place in the Canadian geo-political landscape. They are a part of the nation by the fact that their ancestors lived in this country when it was formed. It is ironical that today these people, despite the official recognition of being the 'First Nations', have to live in reserves facing socio-economic, and political repression.


25. Ibid, p. 139.
31. Ibid, p. 3.


Ibid, p. 70.