UNDERSTANDING INDIGENEITY—DEMOGRAPHY, CULTURE, AND LITERATURE

I. INTRODUCTION

The term 'indigenous' implies belonging to a particular place, in its origins. It can be referred to people, culture, their art, cuisine, customs, habits, and lifestyle. Every country has an indigenous population which might have been erased, dominated, or marginalised by settler communities through wars, colonization, or migrations. Indigenous tribes exist in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, America, South America, Canada, Asia especially India. They are called by different labels in different countries. For instance, in the Indian constitution, they are referred to as Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribes, but otherwise called 'Adivasis.' In Australia they are the 'Aboriginal people, in Canada they are 'First Nation' while in some other Asian countries they are 'Janjati' 'Hunter-Gatherers' or 'Hill Tribes'.

II. ABORIGINALS OF NEW ZEALAND

The indigenous people of Aotearoa (New Zealand) are called Māori. They form an integral part of the demography and culture of this country. Despite having adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the rights of the Māori population remain unfulfilled.

Māori people are of different sub -groups. The first origins of the indigenous peoples can be traced to the Pacific homeland, Rangiatea, almost a thousand years prior to the new settlers who arrived on this land. In those days of adventure and exploration a particular group set sail on a Voyaging Waka or canoe *Tainui*, to seek out and cross the pathways of the oceans. For this indigenous people, the canoe or 'waka' was the sacred vessel which carried them across the ocean. The navigator, and leader Hoturoa, sailed to Kawhia Harbour, where the voyagers decided to settle. Some others continued to migrate across the central and southern North Island towards the Southern South Island. These primitive people however, possessed spiritual knowledge, specific skills, and tools for their livelihood. As this population settled in different regions and became distinct, different tribes emerged. But all of them trace their roots to the 'waka crew.'

The first European explorer came to New Zealand in 1642. He was a Dutch and his name was Abel Tasman. In fact, the country got its name also from a Dutch map maker who called it t 'Nieuw Zeeland'. After a century later an Englishman by the name of James Cook came to the land in 1769. Following this, many Europeans landed here for profitable trade in whales and seals. It is the Europeans who named the natives they saw there, as 'Māori' in order to distinguish them from the white settlers. The term means 'Māori' ordinary.

As is often the case in imperialism, the indigenous tribes soon came under the dominance of these European settlers, who wanted land for their own cultivation, as well as to make settlements for their families. The indigenous people put up a resistance, and soon the conflict between the two races escalated into a war in North Island in the 1860s. Land that belonged to the Māori population was taken or bought by the government during the 20 years of war. The treaty of Waitangi architected by one William Hobson was signed between five

hundred Māori chiefs with the British Crown in February 1840. William Hobson became New Zealand's first Governor. New Zealand turned down the offer to join the Australian Federation in 1890, and became an independent dominion in 1907.However, even now the Māori people remain marginalised in the mainstream white society.

III. INDIGENOUS STUDIES FROM NEW ZEALAND

Māori Literature exists in oral and written forms. The early narratives / folk tales/ legends/ were mostly sung or recited orally through succeeding generations. It is only in the second half of the twentieth century that stories and writing by the indigenous people appeared in their language or in English. The reason being the absence of a written script to the dialects spoken by these people. Although some early European settlers did write about their experiences in the new country in the form of travelogues or journals; the concept of a New Zealand literature, as distinct from English Literature originated only in the 20th century when writers began exploring themes of landscape, isolation, and the emerging New Zealand national identity. Māori writers became recognised in the latter half of the 20th century.

Among the many writers of Māori literature, the name of John Mulgan stands out for being a the first classic writer. One of his work *Man Alone* (1939), describes an isolated and alienated New Zealand, influenced by the Great Depression. Some other works that can be mentioned here are: S*how Down* (1936) by Margaret Escott and Frank Sargesson's short story collection *A Man and His Wife* (1940).

New Zealand, with its picturesque panorama and beautiful wildlife has inspired both English and Indigenous writers to capture the essence of the country through creative writing. Airini Beautrais a poet and short story writer has written a number of books: *Bug Week & Other Stories (*2021), *Secret Heart* (2006), *Falling Shadows* (2020), *Flow: Whanganui River Poems* (2017), are some of them. Another poet Karlo Mila in her poem 'Mana' writes:

> w*hen you flow through my body / I know / I am caught in the current of a river / larger than the length of my own lifetime/ it bends where we have all been before/ same rapids/ other waters/ our veins/ my blood/ I know/ I am in the flow/ of something greater than my own self*

The poem, written in a flow of lyrics, tells us about the Kawarau River in New Zealand. It is known for its rapids and strong currents. This river which has claimed many lives was used by the Māori people in the early days. 'Mana' is an Oceanic word that is found in twenty-nine living languages. It is the spiritual life force or energy or healing power that permeates the universe in Melanesian and Polynesian mythology. Mana may be either good or evil, beneficial, or dangerous. The term was first used in the 19th century in the West during debates concerning the origin of religion. Literature of New Zealand is an interesting juxtaposition between the two cultures that make up New Zealand's identity. Another poet Hone Tuwhare has written a poem 'Rain' which shows the rich visual description of the poet who uses imagery to depict the sound, touch, and smell of rain.

> *I can hear you / making small holes / in the silence / rain*
> *If I were deaf / the pores of my skin /would open to you / and shut*
> *And I / should know you / by the lick of you / if I were blind…*

The **Australian Aboriginals** have come from Asia through Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Philippines, and East Timor thousands of years ago.

They engaged in trades with nearby islands. Some of them, have also come from New Papua Gunia and settled in Torres Island close to the Australian coasts. They call themselves the Torres Islanders. 'Aborigine' is a term that is unwelcome in Australia, due to its racial connotations from the colonial past. The term tends to group people of diverse groups into a homogenous category. The usage of 'Aboriginal person,' or 'Aboriginal' or 'Torres Strait Islander' is a more acceptable term in that country. Using the name of their clan or tribe is by far more appealing to these people. They are also referred to as 'Indigenous Australians', or 'Indigenous people' and have been inhabitants of Australia about 15000 to 50000 years prior to the European settlements in Australia.

The first European to arrive in Australia was a Dutch named William Janszoon. He landed in the Cape York peninsula in the year 1606. At the end of the same year another group led by the Spanish explorer, Lais Vaz de Torres sailed through the Torres Strait and made settlements in the Torres Islands. More navigators and adventurers landed in different parts of Australia. The British navy officer Captain James Cook came in 1770 and charted the east coast for Britain. With his untimely death, further action was taken by James Bank who proposed to make Australia a penal colony for convicts from Britain. In January 1788, the first fleet of British ships arrived with convicts in Botany Bay which is called Sydney today.

With the gradual arrival of Europeans to the Southern continent the life of the Aboriginal people became difficult. The Europeans required land for cultivation as well as to make houses; They boldly took over land from the natives through coercion or violence because as far as the Europeans were concerned the land was *terra nullius* meaning 'territory without a master.' It is a term used in international law to describe a space that does not belong to a state. The misery of the natives affected them in every way. Many of them got infected by diseases brought from overseas by the new arrivals, and without adequate medicines, they succumbed to their illnesses. Their resources having decreased considerably, most of the aboriginal people were further forced to occupy smaller areas of land. According to a report published by Springer Sources and Business Media LLC in 2017, the prolonged

fighting between the European settler s and the Indigenous tribes during 1788 -1920 resulted in the deaths of about 20,000 indigenous people and about 2000 Europeans. The numbers of the Aboriginal people decreased from 750,000 to just 93,000 by 1900.

The Aboriginal people are great story tellers and passed on their culture through an oral tradition that believed in an animist belief system expressed through songs, stories, paintings, and dance. They were also expert hunters and gatherers and had sophisticated ways of taking care of the land. They were semi-nomadic, moving around with the seasons, and returning every season to permanent homes where they grew crops.

Racial discrimination became illegal in Australia in 1976; but that has not protected Indigenous people from being an oppressed community in matters of health, education, and unemployment. Many of them, even now are trapped in poverty and crime. The New Generation Indigenous children have inherited their relatives' trauma and anger, due to loss of land, culture, and families. The policies rolled out by the government has not mitigated the situation. Indigenous people in Australia continue to protest relentlessly for changes in their living conditions. In the year 2000, more than 300,000 people from all kinds of backgrounds walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge calling for national reconciliation. In 2015, huge rallies were held across Australia, to support remote Aboriginal communities' right to live on their traditional lands. The Aboriginal peoples are engaged in enormous lawsuits seeking transfer or restoration of land ownership rights of their traditional property.

IV. AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS LITERATURE

Australian Aboriginal literature is a comparatively new area in academic study; yet the term designates a set of creative-communicative practices which have existed in Australia from time immemorial. It is a vital part of the country's contemporary culture, Aboriginal literature encompasses oral, visual, and performative expression where song and story, lore and law, connect with living traditions from before the times of European settlement. It was writer-scholars Anita Heiss and Peter Minter who first used the term 'Aboriginal' as title for their anthology that was published in 2008. It became the first work to publish in the English language, the range and depth of Aboriginal Writing from the 19th century to the present times. In the words of Heiss and Minter, this anthology "records the history" of the "transformation in the human condition of all Aboriginal people." The anthology includes journalism, petitions, as well as political letters of the 19th and 20th centuries, besides poetry and prose, as significant contribution to World Literature.

Until the 1970s Australian Aboriginal literature was a marginalised voice in Australia. David Unaipon's collection of myths titled *Native Legends* (1929), was the first work written by an aboriginal writer. At that time there was no recognition or demand for Aboriginal writings. However, with the bicentennial celebrations in 1988. The mainstream Australian society began to show interest in Australian Aboriginals and then onwards there has been an explosion of Aboriginal writings- fiction, poetry, film, drama, and music.

Creative works produced by Aboriginals is making a decisive impression across the Australian literary landscape. The critical success of individual works, especially after 1987, such as, Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987), Yothu Yindi's *Treaty* (1922), Doris Pilkington Garimara's *Follow the Rabbit Fence* (1996), Alex Wright's *Plains of Promise* (1997), and

Carpentaria (2006), Rachel Perkin's *Radiance* (1998), Kim Scott's *Benang* (2000), Tara June Winch's *Swallow the Air* (2006) and Anita Heiss' *Not Meeting Mr. Right* (2007), as well as anthologies by Kevin Gilbert, Jack Davis, Adam shoemaker, have significantly added to the corpus of contemporary Australian Aboriginal Literature.

The most significant theme resonating through most of this writing is that of the Stolen Generation. It was Sally Morgan who first brought this to light in her memoir *My Place* (1987). Doris Pilkington has also based her work, *Follow the Rabbit Fence* on this history. It was a legislation enacted by the Australian Federal and State Governments to remove children belonging to mixed racial parents, aged between two and four to mission houses far away from their family. The intention was to educate them and mould them as Europeans having a Western Culture. Even their names were changed in keeping with the new identity. For instance, the original name of Doris Pilkington, was Nugi Garimara. It was changed to a more western name to erase her mixed ancestry.

Sally Morgan was born in 1951, in Western Australia, to an aboriginal mother and a European father. She is told by her parents that she is an Indian. Her mother and grandmother deny that they are aboriginals. Sally Morgan begins searching for her past after she is married and a mother of two children. Morgan's *My Place* is significant for many reasons. It not only talks about the condition of the children of the Stolen generation, but also their oppression in their own land by the settler community who arrived in the 17th century and colonised them. This is also the narrative in *Follow the Rabbit Fence*, written by another victim of the Stolen Generation, Doris Pilkington. It is a biography which narrates the true story of three girls, Molly, Gracie, and Daisy, who were kidnapped and taken to the Moore River Settlement. From there they escape, walking on foot for hundreds of kilometres through the desert, following the rabbit fence. Their courageous journey is not easy: starvation, thirst, and fear of being captured again, are constant throughout their long walk. Two of them succeed in reaching back to their families. One of them is cunningly misled by an officer and taken back to the settlement. The fence which was literally constructed to keep out the quickly-multiplying rabbits that originally arrived on the ships from Europe, also becomes a metaphor of cruelty and incompetence of the colonials to address issues in the country.

V. CANADA- NORTH AMERICA- SOUTH AMERICA

It has been reported in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences published in December 2022 that the first inhabitants of Canada, North America and South America share a common ancestry (Farmer, 2022). The continents of Asia, Europe and America were not divided by oceans in that age. Beringia was geographically located between Europe and America. It was called Bering Land Bridge extending from north-eastern Russia, Siberia with north-western America, Alaska. The exact timing of human migration into North America remains unresolved, but some studies suggest that people lived in Beringia throughout the height of the Ice Age. It is also suggested that people may have started going across as soon as the land bridge was formed.

The population of Beringia lived in isolation for about 20,000 years during the Ice Age. The human migration to the Americas happened about 16,500 years ago when earth's temperature became warmer, glaciers melted, sea-levels rose and land formations were submerged in floods Beringia became partly submerged and in place of Bering Land Bridge,

there was the Bering Strait connecting the Pacific and Arctic Oceans. This allowed people to go south into Canada and beyond (Tamou, Erika et.al 2007).

The Native American populations diverged from Asian populations about 36,000 years ago which is approximately the same time as the Bering Land Bridge emerged (Dyke, Moore, & Robertson 2003). The first inhabitants of North America arrived in Canada at least 14,000 years ago. One hypothesis is that people walked south by way of an ice-free corridor on the east side of the Rocky Mountains and then spread out across North America before continuing to South America (Jordan 2009). Another argument is that route of migrations could have been either on foot or by using primitive boats down the Pacific coast to the tip of South America and then crossed the Rocky Mountains and Andes (*American Antiquity* 44(1) pp-55-69).

More details of these early inhabitants have been drawn from excavations of archaeological sites. It shows that they were hunter-gatherers, consisting of about twenty to fifty members of an extended family. Around 8000 BCE, the Na-Dene people occupied northwest and central North America. These were the earliest ancestors of the Athabaskan-speaking peoples, including Navajo and Apache. Canada became populated by 7000-5000 BCE in the west coast by various tribes, These tribes organised themselves around salmon fishing. The Red Paint People were another indigenous community living in the New England region, in Canada. They flourished between 3000 BCE and 1000 BCE (5000 – 3000 years ago) and was named after their cultural practice around burial ceremonies. They used large quantities of red ochre to cover dead bodies and grave goods.

There was an estimated population of 200,000 Indigenous people living in Canada at the time of the first European arrival which began in the 16th century. This epochal event changed the demography drastically. A lot of natives fell dead due to strange diseases that were brought by sea-farers or their vessels, Further the European settler community needed land to build settlements for themselves and for agriculture. This resulted in severe conflicts between the two races. Consequently, the native population declined drastically. However, after 1950s the population has increased due to higher birth rates and access to improved medical care.

Indigenous peoples in Canada comprise of three main communities. Even though, ‘Indian’ is a term still used in legal documents, the description ‘Indian’ and ‘Eskimo’ is no longer used in Canada. Many also consider it pejorative now. Aboriginal people as a collective noun is the specific term used in most legal documents. However, even this term is no longer favoured because each community has a distinct culture. They fall into broadly three categories: First Nation, Inuit, and Metis. First Nations settled in Canada and established trade routes by about 500 BCE- 1000 BCE. This group has its own distinct culture, custom, and character. They developed permanent urban settlements or cities. They even carried on trade with Europeans much before Christopher Columbus discovered America. The Inuit are descendants of what anthropologists call the Thule culture which emerged from Western Alaska around 1000 CE and spread eastward across the Arctic. Historically they are referred to as Tuniit meaning “giants” due to their big body shape. By 1300 CE, the Inuit had settled in West Greenland and moved to East Greenland over the following century. The Inuit had trade with Southern cultures. Warfare was common among these people because of their physical stature and their population density.

The Metis are people descended from marriages between Europeans (mainly French) and other indigenous communities such as Cree, Ojibway, Algonquin etc. Their history dates to the 17th century. When the Europeans first arrived, they relied on the Aboriginal peoples for skills in trading and other indigenous means of livelihood, in order to, survive in the new land. The close interaction led to social bonding between Europeans and natives and the children of such marriages came to be called Metis. They largely lived in the areas which is today called British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and the Northwest Territories (Prine, 2015).

By the 18th century, the Europeans had established governance in Canada. In the process they introduced the theory of assimilation of the Aboriginal people into European culture which was also considered the culture of Canada. It began with a series of initiatives aimed at total assimilation and subjugation of the indigenous population. The Gradual Civilization Act and the Indian Act introduced legislations that focused on European ideals of Christianity, sedentary lifestyle, agriculture, and education. The Christianization of the Aboriginal people had been ongoing, since the arrival of the first European missionaries to Canada in the 1600s. The Indian Act in 1876 brought new sanctions upon those who did not convert to Christianity. The new law would prevent non-Christian Aboriginal people from testifying or having their cases heard in court. They would also be disallowed from using alcohol. The Indian Act underwent amendment in the subsequent years. In 1884, traditional, religious practices came to be banned; in 1920 "status Indians" were not allowed to wear traditional dress or to perform traditional dances. There was a conscious and determined effort by the government to erase the indigenous culture of the Aboriginal population.

The final strategy of assimilation formulated by the government was the Canadian residential school system. Beginning from 1847, until 1996 the Canadian government in partnership with the dominant Christians, ran 130 residential boarding schools across Canada. This was meant for the education of the Indigenous children who would be forcibly removed from their families and put into such boarding schools. Although the schools succeeded in providing some education to these children, they were plagued by lack of funds, widespread diseases, and abuses of every kind (Popic,2008). A legal case in 2006, 2008 confirmed the injurious effect the schooling had on the children. This created tension between Indigenous people and the settler communities. In 2008, the then Prime Minister of Canada issued an apology on behalf of the Canadian government and its citizens for the residential school system (Charles, Grant et.al 2013).

Over the years, many laws, treaties, and amendments have been enacted between European immigrants and the Aboriginal people in Canada. Consequently, the common perception in Canada today is that Aboriginal peoples in Canada have a right to self-government. They have the right to the opportunity to manage historical, cultural, political, health care and economic aspects within their own community. However, some Canadian legislations contradict this, for instance the prevalent Indian Act. According to the 2021 census the Indigenous population constitute 5% of the national population with 1,048,405 First Nations people, 624,000 Metis and 70, 540 Inuit people. Out of the total number of Indigenous people 7.7% are children below the age of fourteen. It is imperative, that as the years progress a greater parity and accommodation between the settler community and the Indigenous people so that the country acquires an identity which is partly indigenous as well. Now there is a National Indigenous Day celebrated in the country wherein people of non-

western origins showcase their culture, language and traditions. All this will play a decisive role in shaping the Canadian cultural identity.

VI. INDIGENOUS LITERATURE OF CANADA

As it is with the Indigenous population so also is it with literature: it is a culturally diverse group with differences in language, customs, and beliefs. Therefore, the very term 'Indigenous Literature' can be misleading due to this heterogeneity. Writer Jeannette Armstrong, who is also a spokesperson for an organization called Indigenous Peoples Rights, states in an interview: "I would stay away from the idea of 'Native Literature;' there is no such thing. There is Mohawk Literature, Okanagan Literature, but there is no generic Native in Canada." As an associate professor of Indigenous Studies in the Irving K. Barber Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, she admits her passion for Indigenous research that advances knowledge, and helps to improve environmental and practices. She refutes the belief that knowledge exists only with the English or the French culture. On the other hand, according to her, "Language is identity. Indigenous knowledge systems and an Indigenous paradigm—how we view the world and how we interact—is deeply rooted in language." She stated this in the UBC Okanagan Indigenous culture orientation program at the time of signing the declaration of UBC Okanagan, 2019. She argues that the indigenous cannot study the European knowledge systems through their own languages. There must necessarily be a reconciliation between the European and the Indigenous.

Cherie Dimaline is an Indigenous Canadian writer from the Georgian Bay Metis Nation which is part of the Metis Nation of Ontario. She has written a variety of award - winning novels, short stories, and articles. Her famous novel is *The Marrow Thieves* (2019). It is a survival story about "recruiters" harvesting the bone marrow of indigenous people for a non-indigenous clientele that has lost the 'ability to dream'(Walter de Guyter GmbH, 2020). The bone marrow of the indigenous people is believed to be crucial to recover something the Europeans have lost: the 'ability to dream.' Another of her novel, *Empire of Wild* (2019), focuses on a community of displaced Metis descendants, who reach Arcand, Canada, determined to make a living.

Rita Joe was a poet and song writer of the Mi'kmaq people and referred to as their Poet Laureate. She wrote powerful poetry about indigenous identity and the legacy of residential schools in Canada. She was born in 1932 and passed away in 2007. Her poetry and songs have influenced both the indigenous and non-indigenous people of Canada. Lindsay Marshall also belonged to the same community. He wrote poetry about the Mi'kmaq heritage and his own life.

Isabella Knockwood (1931-2020) was the first to document the abuses and experiences suffered at the Indian Residential Schools in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, in Canada in her non-fiction work *Out of the Depths*. She herself was an inmate in this school from 1936 to 1947.

Jeannette Armstrong, who belongs to the Syilx indigenous community of Okanagan, states in an interview: " the Okanagan language was given to us by the land we live in.. the land constantly speaks .. not to learn its language is to die. We lived and survived by constantly listening to its teachings, and then inventing words to tell its stories… the spirit of

the land speaks to us through generations" (Fee, 2022). "I have heard elders say that it was the land that changed the language because there was special knowledge in each place" (Cariou, 2018).

Richard Wagamese, in his novel *Indian Horse* (2012) tells of the life of a boy named Saul Indian Horse, a First Nations boy from Ontario. He survives the brutal residential school system, and becomes a talented ice hockey player. However, his past traumas resurface in his adult life and he becomes an alcoholic. The message the writer conveys is applicable to all oppressed people in the world: that systemic injustice builds a foundation of private pain within the individual, and it further destroys his chances of success in the world. *Heart Berries* (2018), a debut novel by First Nation Canadian writer, Terese Marie Mailhot, is a memoir about Mailhot's activist mother, abusive father and her own life. After a troubled childhood, followed by an early and tumultuous motherhood, her struggles continue. She suffers mental health problems and a crisis of identity. Her book discusses the wages of intergenerational trauma. She grew up on Seabird Island Indian Reservation in British Columbia, Canada. *Moon of the Crusted Snow* (2018) by Waubgeshig Rice, *Jonny Appleseed* (2018) written by Joshua Whitehead are some other examples of this category of literature.

Native American literature is literature both oral and written, produced by Native Americans from pre-Columbian times to the present, in what is now the United States. It includes Oral histories, folktales, creation myths, songs, hieroglyphics, and pictographs. There are many different cultures, tribes and traditions within the American Indigenous population: it encompasses diverse Native American experience. Native American literature helps readers understand the rich diversity of this minority population and its contribution to the cultural mosaic of America.

Prior to the coming of the Europeans, native Americans had a rich story-telling tradition. They spoke about folktales, myths, and oral histories. The arrival of the Europeans and the consequent political upheaval produced autobiographical accounts which was a departure from their oral story-telling tradition. With the introduction of formal education in English, mostly started by the missionaries, literature changed language and style. Many writers turned to personal stories, and political texts to draw attention of the government towards their sufferings and denial of human rights. Zitkala-Sa, (1876-1938), a well-known early Native American writer, wrote about her struggles and intersectionality in *American Indian Stories* (1921). She identified it as the conflict between her Yankton Dakota reservation heritage and her European white formal education. This intersectionality later became a common theme in many Native American Literature. From 1960s to 1970s marked the renaissance of this Native American literature as white readers grew interested to read and know about the indigenous population in their own country.

Stephen Graham Jones' novel *The Only Good Indians* (2020) is a Native horror story that re-appropriates the racist trope of the 'Indian curse.' Jones belongs to The Blackfeet Nation, one of the largest Native American tribes in the U.S. Earlier they inhabited the northwest territory of Montana, but was displaced by the British traders and American settlers. For centuries the fertile forestlands helped preserve a rich hunting and fishing culture that sets the stage for Stephen Jones horror novel.

Robin Wall Kimmerer a Native American writer, has written *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013), a non-fiction that brings together her academic knowledge as a botanist and her traditional knowledge as a member of the Potawatomi Nation. In a series of essays, informed by both science and lore, she goes on to reveal how our relationship with the flora and fauna can be enriched by acknowledging their role as our oldest teachers, and the reciprocal nature of our shared existence on this planet. She is a distinguished Teaching Professor of Environment and Forest Biology as well as the director of the Centre for Natives Peoples and the Environment at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

VII. SOUTH AMERICA

Latin America or *Abaya Yala* as it is called in the Kuna language means "Land in its Full Maturity," The Indigenous people are the descendants of the first inhabitants who have migrated from Asia and Europe at the end of the Ice Age which is about 13000 years ago. After their land was conquered by European conquistadors the lost both land and identity. Although they resisted the European settlers and continued fighting for their racial, cultural, and linguistic identity not much has changed. It has been a long history of indigenous rebellions and symbolic reappropriations of the "New world." Latin America has traditionally been and continues to be one of the regions of the world with the greatest diversity of indigenous cultures. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in a survey conducted in 2014 states that there are 826 different indigenous people in Latin America and the Caribbean, with an estimated population of 58 million people (ECLAC, 2014). It was founded in 1948, with the aim of co-ordinating economic development in the different states of Latin America by mutual projects as well as with ties with other nations of the world.

Mapuche is the largest group of Indians in South America. They are mostly concentrated in the Central Valley of Chile, south of the Biobio River. Ancient America was home to some sophisticated civilizations such as Maya, Inca, Olmec, and Aztec societies. The indigenous community is called by different names in different regions of South America. The term 'Aborigen' is used in Argentina; *pueblos indigenas* (Spanish word) in Columbia, and 'Amerindian' (short for 'Indians of the Americas') is often used in the Guianas. Latin Americans of mixed European and Indigenous descent are referred to as *mestizos* (Spanish), while those of mixed African and Indigenous ancestry are referred to as *zambos.*

As has been mentioned earlier, the first human population of South America have come from either arrived from Asia via North America through the Bering Land Bridge, southwards; or some tribes could have migrated have come from the Polynesian islands across the Pacific. Archaeological evidence show that South America came to be inhabited by the indigenous population about 14000 years ago. They were largely hunter-gatherers in the Amazonian region; some of the Andean cultures practiced sophisticated agriculture, utilized advanced irrigation, and kept domestic livestock.

In the present day the indigenous people constitute the largest ethnic group in Peru (45%) and Bolivia (62%). Although writing in indigenous languages and cultures had never disappeared, the numbers of indigenous people in the hemisphere had declined precipitously after the invasion of Europeans. The Spanish colonization began with the arrival of

Christopher Columbus in 1492 and continued for over three centuries. It happened in parts initially: Panama (1519), Leon, Nicaragua (1524), Cartagena (1532), Bogota (1538), Quito (1534), Lima (1535), Santiago de Chile (1544) etc. Spain colonized the major parts of South America and Portugal colonized present day Brazil. This resulted in the dominance of Spanish and Portuguese languages on the continent.

VIII. LITERATURE OF THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AMERICA

As is the case with all Indigenous literature, Latin American indigenous population has a rich literary tradition. It can be divided into two traditions of the early and the modern. The early literary tradition is rendered in the indigenous language of diverse communities and is largely oral because scripts and alphabets had not been discovered for these languages. However, many of the rituals, myths, belief systems, legends, and history, were handed down to posterity through the medium of songs and stories. Later, writings encompass a vast heterogeneous textual production such as pre-Hispanic codices, colonial documents, letters, chronicles, autobiographies, testimonies, poems, short stories, novels etc. that has been written by indigenous peoples themselves often using their own languages and reflecting their own worldviews. Since decades, the production of indigenous literatures has flourished. New multilingual editions and anthologies of indigenous poetry, fictional narratives and other genres are currently being published. This new literature is also part of the contemporary social struggle of indigenous communities to affirm their right to exist with dignity, preserving their own cultures and languages. Quechua, Kichwa, Aymara, Nahuati, Maya, and Mapudungan literatures are some of the more prominent ones among many others.

Common focus in literature by contemporary indigenous writers include the preservation of traditional tales and wisdom, celebration of their people's past, and their struggles for land, rights, and recognition. For these authors, literature is a way of claiming a space for their people, within or apart from the Western culture that surrounds them. It attempts to challenge the official "national" narrative that present their cultures as archaeological relics. The motive of indigenous literature becomes a way to showcase their life and culture as vibrant, living, contemporary with meaningful contributions that will benefit the globalized world.

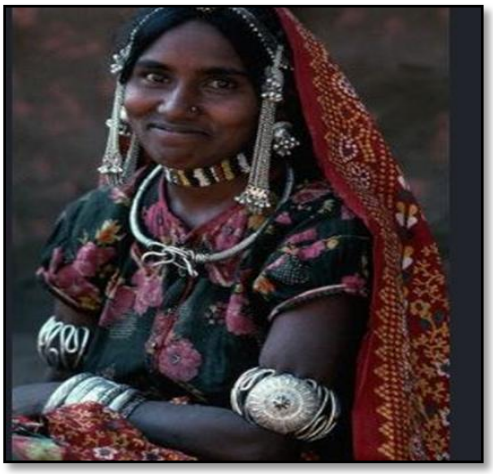
Two notable works that give an overview of the indigenous peoples of Latin America would be: *The No-Nonsense Guide to Indigenous Peoples* (2003) by Lotte Hughes; *The Indian in Latin American history: Resistance, Resilience, and Acculturation* (1999), edited by John E. Kicza (*Walter Gruyter Gmbh* 2013). Lotte's work traces the initial interaction of the indigenous tribes with the European explorers, and colonizers through stories. It reveals their struggles when caught between their own identity and the persuasion of assimilation to become more 'white.' It also reveals their objection to being presented as exhibit objects in museums. The compiled work of Kicza is an interdisciplinary study of the conflicting relations between the Indigenous and the Europeans.

IX. INDIA

The country has the second largest number of indigenous people, after Africa. There are about 705 different kinds of indigenous groups living in India according to the 2021 census. They comprise of 8.6% of the nation's total population. They are categorised as Schedule Tribe in the Indian Constitution. Otherwise, they are called Adivasi in common parlance. The word is made of two Sanskrit words: 'Adi" meaning beginning and "vasi" meaning inhabitant or dweller. Therefore, they existed in the land thousands of years prior to the arrival of other races from Asia, or Europe to India. I can even be as far back as 12800 years ago when the Ice Age was ending.

The term 'Adivasi' was coined in the 1930s by political activists to give the tribal people an identity across the country. The government of India does not officially recognise tribes as indigenous people and refused to sign the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, that was an initiative of the UN. Instead, India chose to include these groups as Scheduled Tribe category under constitutional provisions of the country. Adivasi societies are mainly found in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Northeastern India, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Many present-day Adivasi communities have been formed after the decline of the Indus Valley civilisation. They carry varying degrees of ancestry from ancient hunter-gatherers, Indus Valley civilisation, Indo-Aryan, Austroasiatic and Tibeto-Burman language speakers. Ancestors of Munda peoples in India were migrants from South-east Asia around 4000-5000 years ago (c.2000--1500 BCE). Tribals of East, Central, West and South India use the politically assertive term *Adivasi*, while Tribals of North East India use 'Tribal' or 'Scheduled Tribe' and refrain from using the term 'Adivasi' for themselves. Adivasi Studies has emerged as a new scholarly field which is multi-disciplinary: drawing upon, archaeology, anthropology, agrarian history, environmental history, subaltern studies, aboriginal studies and developmental economics.

The commonly known tribes in India are Gonds, Bhils (Bheels), Santhal, Munda, Khasi, Garo, Bhutia, Chenchu, Kodaba, and the Andaman tribes. Among these, the Bhil group is the largest in number as well as the oldest. Their name is derived from the word 'billu' meaning a bow. They live in the central part of India, stretching from Gujarat in the east, to Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan to Northern Tripura (Singh 2020). Some are also found in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. Studies reveal that they are descendants of the Dravidian racial tribe and their language is of Dravidian origin. They belong to the Australoid race. In North Tripura they engage as workers in the tea gardens. Their religion is Hinduism. They appease deities of the forests and evil spirits, besides worshipping Lord Shiva and Durga. A small percentage among them also follow Christianity.



Halakki Vokkaligas tribe live in the foothills of the Western Ghats. They are known as the "Aboriginals of Uttara Kannada." They maintain an ancient way of living. Their women adorn themselves with beads, necklaces, heavy nose-rings, and bangles. They wear a distinctive attire and speak a dialect of Kannada called Achchagannada. The word 'Halakki' literally means milk (*Haalu*) and rice (*Akki*) in Kannada language. There is another indigenous tribe inhabiting Karnataka, called Kudiya. They live in Kodagu district near Mysore. Another tribe named Karuba live in the thickly forested slopes and foothills of the Nilgiris plateau in Kodagu (Karnataka) and Tamil Nadu. Then there is the Soligas tribe, an indigenous community that live in the tiger reserve forests there. They are known for their deep knowledge about the plants and animals of the forest where they live: Biligiri Rangana Hills and Male Mahadeshwara. They are adept at identifying animals from the pug marks and smells. However, the Soligas were evicted from the forest and relocated to the plains when the Government announced BR Hills as a wild life sanctuary in 1974. In 2011, the sanctuary was also declared a tiger reserve. Most of the tribals were very unhappy with this and they put up resistance. They argued that they had survived peacefully co-existing with the animals in the forest, tending to them in sickness and informing the forest officials of serious illnesses among the animals. They worship the tiger as *Huliverappa.* Achugegowda, their leader for legal battles, took the matter to the court in 2008. The court ruled in favour of the Soligas and granted land rights to 1,200 families. These got their traditional land back.

Minas is a tribal community in Rajasthan, said to be descended from Indus Valley Civilization. They have tall, athletic body with sharp facial features.

The Kanjars of Chambal Rajasthan were originally valorous Rajputs who were pushed to the margins by multiple invasions in the Indian Subcontinent. Known as 'Bhati Rajput' many of them fled to the jungles. They became rebels or *baghis*. They operate from the ravines around the Chambal River. They came to be known as 'Kanjars.' The Kurumba of the Nilgiris, of Tamil Nadu , are descendants of the Pallava Dynasty of South India.They are forest dwellers, and one of the oldest inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. Scattered in the hills around the Nilgiris, the Kurumba tribe is believed to possess extraordinary spiritual and supernatural powers. Most of them earn a livelihood by selling forest produce.

The indigenous people constitute 1.43 % of Kerala's total population. Wayanad and Attapady in Palakkad district hold the maximum number of tribal groups. This is followed by Idukki district. The tribal community in these areas are mostly wage labourers, working on the lands belonging to plantation owners. Some 10% of them have their own land to cultivate. They are categorised by different names such as, Paniyan, Kurichian, Malayarayan, Kattunaikan, Muthuvan, and Adiyan. Besides these, there may still be some ethnic groups who are different from all of these and have not been identifies due to their small number. Among the tribal community, the Malayarayan tribes have the highest literacy rate of 94.5%. All the others have very low literacy rates. They mostly dwell in the thick forests of the Western

Ghats, cut off from mainstream society. --An Ulladan tribe couple of Kerala.

A major threat to the self-sustained tribal economy is the proliferation of non-tribes into the prime abodes of the tribal community, in order to exploit the rich natural resources in the forests. The expansion of the tourism industry has played a significant role in plundering the forest and its dwellers.

Chakma are tribals living in West Bengal and Bangladesh. They follow Buddhism. Nearly every Chakma village has a Buddhist monk who is called *Bikhsu.* The Chakma community regard their monks with great respect and honour

X. INDIGENOUS LITERATURE OF INDIA

Early literature about the indigenous people were mostly written by non- tribal writers mostly belonging to an educated, upper class. However, in the mid twentieth century many works of translation has entered the literary scene. Translators have done a commendable job in revealing the stories and beliefs of the indigenous people which otherwise would remain unknown to the larger world of English -speaking community.

Mahasweta Devi is an upper caste writer who did meticulous research on the Munda tribe uprising of 1899-1900 ACE. Her novel titled *Aranyer Adhiker* (1978) brings out the significance of Birsa Munda's great rebellion and its contemporary relevance. In the article written by Trisita Karmakar, and published in *IJFMR*, May -June 2023, on the novel by Mahasweta Devi, the scholar states that, "in post-colonial India the White imperialists have simply been replaced by the ruthless landowners and crafty merchants and developers who together carry out a systematic destruction of the forests which have been home to these tribals for centuries. A destruction of environment poses a threat to a whole way of life. It threatens to destroy age-old tribal traditions that are closely bound with the land" (Vol6, Issue 3: pp 6).

Mahasweta Devi has always focused on the unsung tribal heroes and their life in the Chotanagpur region in Jharkhand. Being a social-political activist as well, her insight into the problems and causes, which resulted in the tribal agitation of 1899 called Munda Uprising, is invaluable. In her view the uprising was due to the combined interference of feudal lords, zamindars, police, labour- contractors, in the hitherto peaceful life of the Munda tribals. In her Foreword to the novel Devi herself points out that prior to the colonialization of the country by the British, the tribal people lived a very peaceful and happy life. They could

roam about in the jungle, cultivate their food, worship their own god 'Singhbhoga.'Their peaceful lives were disrupted by the introduction of the land revenue system of the British. Their religious lives were also affected.

The Christian missionaries and the Hindu religious gurus interrupted their existence in their own land. They were coerced into conversion, either to Christianity or Hinduism. Being worshippers of Mother Nature, they became as helpless as the forest that was being destroyed by deforestation by the British colonial rulers. Such continuous exploitation produced a rebel named Birsa Munda who gathered his community and waged a 'Ulgulan' meaning 'a great tumult.' The British captured Birsa and his comrades and put them in prison. The torture meted out to him did not kill him. Finally, he was poisoned to death in prison at the young age of twenty-five. The British put out a story of him dying from cholera infection in the prison. Birsa's body was cremated. It was against the ritual of burial followed by these tribal people. However, to the Munda community, Birsa was like a God, invincible. The torch he ignited was carried on by others. They believed that the "Ulgulan has no end; Bhagwan has no death" (Devi 89).

The novel *Kochuarethi: The Araya Woman* (1998) originally written in the Malayalam language and translated into English by Catherine Thankammma, tells the story of the Mala Araya tribal community, in the first half of the twentieth century. The writer Narayan who was himself from the Mala Arayan community narrates the story of a young woman, named Kunjipennu and her husband Kochuraman. They lived in the forests of the Western Ghats, in the pepper belt along the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border. They are familiar with the forests and its environment. Trouble brews when poverty forces them to go to the town in search of job. Their gullible, naïve nature does not prepare them for the cruelties of life. When Kochuraman falls seriously ill due to starvation and hardships, he is taken to the hospital. However, his wife cannot trust the modern medicines and takes him out of the hospital. The writer skilfully articulates the natives' opposition to any change or modernity. Therefore, their lives remain one of alienation, difficulty, and victimization, in the city. There are allied issues woven into the work: gender inequality, environmental degradation, cultural identity, resistance, and land rights.

There is a corpus of indigenous writings- novels and short stories from the Northeastern states of Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Nagaland. There are many creative writings that have been made available through translations into English and Hindi. One such novel is *Mrityunjay* by an Assamese writer B. K. Bhattacharya, translated into English by D.N. Bezonah. The title means 'conquering death' or becoming immortal. The novel gives an illuminating insight into the struggles and commitments of the Assamese society against the British rule in 1942. *Deo Langkhui: The Divine Sword* (2008), by Rita Choudhary, an Assamese poet and novelist, unravels the issues of then-contemporary Tiwa society as well as their customs and traditions. The novel won the Sahitya Akademi Award of that year.

There are some non-fictional works that must also be included to get a taste of the rich diversity of literature from the indigenous groups living in India. *Khasi Folk Songs and Tales* (2006), is a series documented by Bharatiya Adivasi sahitya Indian Literature and translated by Desmond L. Kharmawphlang. It deals with the tribes and subtribes of the Khasi and Jainitia hills, located in the northeastern state of Meghalaya (*Modern Asian Studies* 2011).

There is an anthropological study done by Felix Padel and Samarendra Das titled, *Out of this Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aliminium Cartel* (2010). This book uncovers the hidden history behind the mining projects in tribal areas of South Odisha. In this area, some of the world's best bauxite deposits are found in large quantities, capping the mountains. It can bring prosperity to the poorest state of India. But this is not that case as modern developmental strategies collide with the locals' perception of metal factories as a colonial invasion of their environment. Tribal people who have live around them since early times, do not see these mountains as a resource to be exploited, but a source of life itself. It is a book written with meticulous research, and therefore it revels the displacement and cultural genocide of adivasis, alongside hideous scams and pollution. It exposes the politics between the Kond adivasis and the Bauxite Corporation.

The Burning Forest: India's war in Bastar (2016), by Nandini Sarkar, a sociology professor in the Delhi School of Economics, whose area of interest is political sociology, law and inequality. It brings us real-life stories of tribal villagers, Maoists, and security forces. The book is based on extensive field visits, court testimonies, government documents and a firsthand experience with the people in the events mentioned in the book. The tribals are the unfortunate casualties in the war between the government and the Maoists. Bastar has come of the largest mineral resources of India; this makes the conflict have far-reaching impact upon the ecology and culture of Bastar. Nidhi Dugar Kundalia's work *White as Milk and Rice*: *Stories of India's Isolated Tribes* (2020), weaves together through prose, oral narratives, and Adivasi history to tell the stories of six remarkable tribes of India. For instance, the Maria girls of Bastar practice sex as an institution before marriage. The rule to be followed is that they cannot sleep with a partner more than three times. The Halakki women from the Konkan coasts sing throughout the day, in forests, fields, the market and even in protests; the Kanjars have plundered and looted and killed generation after generation; they will show you how to roast a lizard for food when hungry.

XI. CONCLUSION

Indigenous studies/literature/writings play a very important part in understanding the demography and culture of a nation/ a country. Elitist discourses often focus on the issues of the majority. However, Indigenous communities, and their culture, cannot be overlooked in the larger picture of a country's identity. Indigenous literature often strikes at the root of hegemonic historiography: the indigenous writer succeeds in bringing a paradigmatic shift in mainstream historiography by turning the lens upon local uprisings that tell a different tale than what has hitherto been told. In a country like India, the demographic diversity is interwoven with its biodiversity, cultural pluralism, ethno-linguistics. This is a growing and challenging area for study and research in multidisciplinary epistemology.

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