

Tracing of Historical Impressions in the Folktales and Songs – A Canadian Experience Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*

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Abstract

Colonialism has brought more than three-quarters of people under hegemony. European Colonisation resulted in submerge of national consciousness. After colonialism, new perceptions of thought are expressed through literary writings and other forms of art such as painting, sculpture, music and dance. The experiences of the colonised people are presented in the postcolonial literature and thus postcolonial writings have become profoundly influential. These writings concern with the emergence of national cultures after the departure of the imperial powers – Modern Canadian Writings and recent West Indian Literature. Postcolonial writings intend to erase and/or rewrite the inscriptions of the White dominant culture on the colonised subjects. The authors of literary texts in the colonised countries use various strategies which enable re-construction of the effaced signs, symbols, myths and folklore of the countries that were under the European rule. In Canada, Margaret Laurence strives to reconstruct the 'lost identities' of the ethnic groups such as the Métis and the Scots in her literary writings. Striving for social recognition, rebelling against the brutality of racial discrimination and experiencing the barbaric disturbances between ethnic groups are the core issues in the novels of Margaret Laurence. The theme of identity (the sense of belonging), exile (out of place), estrangement (sense of place), and ambivalence (inability to decide their position) are analysed with emphasis on the ethnic diversity. Her stay in Africa, where she had finished her first novel *This Side Jordan*, generated in her a thirst for understanding others' culture. While she was in Canada, she wanted to venture into the cultural composition of the subjugated group – the Métis – in her own land – Canada. Her *The Diviners* stands as an epitome of nostalgia and folklore in the Scottish – Canadian ancestry and tradition. The paper analyses the interwoven attributes of cultural polyvalency and social chronology.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Hybridity, Memory, Ethnicity, Hegemony, Nation, Consciousness.

“Evidently literature ‘imitates,’ ‘depicts,’ ‘represents,’ ‘presents,’ embodies people, objects, societies, ideas ...” (*A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, 134)

Literature focuses on every day life of human society. It concerns the life structure of the proletariat who are at the lower strata of life. The focus on the soul of an individual is of paramount importance on the periphery and that endorses the cumulative account of the society on the whole. The desire of an individual for freedom and identity seem to be the constituting force that is often reflected in literature. While history depicts the occurrences with chronology, literature produces literary documents blending with historical occurrences and chronological developments of any nation thereby reflecting the social set up of the particular era.

Welleck and Warren present the social liability of literature in *Theory of Literature* which exemplifies:

Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation ... literature ‘represents’ ‘life’; and ‘life’ is, in large measure, a social reality ... The relation between literature and society is usually discussed by starting with the phrase, derived from De Bonald, that ‘literature is an expression of society’... It is a specific evaluative criterion to say that an author should express the life of his own time fully, that he should be ‘representative’ of his age and society. Besides, of course, the terms ‘fully’ and ‘representative’ require much interpretation: in most social criticism they seem to mean that an author should be aware of specific social situations, e.g. of the plight of the proletariat,... (94 - 95)

It is with the philanthropic endeavour that the postcolonial writings encompass the wide array of neglected conventions of the victimized clusters of the populace who were grappling with the hegemonic aspirations of the British under colonisation. The repercussions of the colonial ruthlessness have had an effect of turmoil on the various established institutions of the cluttered societies of the indigenous. The cultural institutions of the British were proclaimed as the 'universal' as they had brought almost all the nations under their hegemony. The colonized countries did have their inherited cultural heritage which was in total neglect. The colonised were forced to relinquish their authority over their social and cultural establishments. The emergence of postcolonial literature paved the way for the consideration of the subjugated souls that were under the colonial rule. The British colonisation caused various physical and traumatic afflictions on them for centuries. The postcolonial study gathers the historical and literary legacies of any nation under this regime.

The term post-colonial literally refers to the period that follows the departure of the coloniser from the country whereas postcolonial emphasises the projection of indigenous facets of the colonised countries and the discussion on them. The definition of the term 'postcolonial' that seems to be unconvinced for years is addressed by Rai in The Spiel Journal of English Studies, " 'Post – colonial' and 'postcolonial' have different meanings. The hyphenated term marks a historical period as is suggested by phrases like 'after colonialism', 'after independence', 'after the end of empire'. Postcolonialism refers to different forms of representations, reading -practices and values," (1)

Postcolonialism – the dismantling of colonialism – has been regarded as one of the most spectacular phenomenon of the twentieth century. The exit of the royal regime of the British, which has laid its roots of superiority over the years in the colonised countries, seems to be the primal perspective of the postcolonial literature. It focuses on heterogeneity, difference, alterity, hybridity, subalternity, diaspora, resistance, migration and displacement of the nations which were under the colonial rule. While colonialism brought the nations under the European ascendancy, postcolonialism strives to free the fetters of the colonialism and further intends to establish the uniqueness of every nation and their cultural, religious and linguistic forms.

The indigenous clusters of people who have been victimised by the strategies of colonisation strive to find their own self rather 'identity' / 'space' in their own region of cultural, social and spiritual heritage. The homogeneity of the invaded cultural traits has attained the heterogeneous status by the accumulation of the indigenous institutions. It is the galaxy that finds the sublime combination of the attributes - native culture, people, race, myth, rituals, traditions, folklore and customs - of the so long colonised clusters of the people. The exploration of them in the literary archives appears to be the unique aspirations of the postcolonial writers who venerate the 'ordinary' to be sublime.

The postcoloniality of the countries – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Caribbean and Africa – open a forum for exhibiting their own treasures of the literary, cultural, religious and linguistic attributes. The focus of these magnificent integrants of any nation seems to be the consequence of the departure of the colonisers in their own land. The nobility of this postcolonial literature is to consider the neglected, weak, suppressed, meek and forbidden souls of these countries. The dominance of the colonial legacy over the colonised regions has not only left the physical impressions on them but also the psychological scars. Rai states the primal concern of postcolonial writings and their dealing with the prerequisites of postcolonial perspectives: "Post colonial studies are preoccupied issues of hybridity, creolisation, in - betweenness, diasporas and timinality with the mobility and cross - overs of ideas and identities generated by colonialism". (The Spiel Journal of English Studies 11).

The Western thoughts were aimed at infusing a mentally hybrid population and establishing the western schools of thought as sublime among the colonised countries even after emancipation.

In The Spiel Journal of English Studies, Rai includes the version of Benedict who categorises the process as 'mental miscegenation' to create Europeanized natives and in Macaulay's words "a class of persons, Indian in blood in colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect." (11) It was inclined to institutionalise the cultural praxis of the imperialists in the native society which has had devastating repercussions among the nations those were under the hegemony of the colonisers. The psychic affliction is another traumatic stress caused by the colonisers on the colonised. Even the scar remains to be cured and Eurocentric assumptions that have been rooted are to be wiped out on the whole. The colonised countries still maintain the cultural authorities of the British. George Lamming expresses the enduring issue in 'The Occasion for Speaking': "Britain without its empire can still maintain cultural authority in post - colonial societies, and the ways in which Eurocentric assumptions about race, nationality and literature return time and again to haunt the production of post - colonial writing" (Postcolonial Studies Reader 7)

It is evident that the literatures of Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, New Zealand and Pakistan and African countries are all the postcolonial literature. The hostility towards the invaded culture dominates the postcolonial writings. Donne Bennett is his essay English Canada's post colonial complexities states, "Post colonialism is a point of view that contains within it a basic binarism: it divides our way of thinking about a people into two parts, as colonial opposed to postcolonial. *Colonial* denotes a way of seeing that accepts the imperial point of view, while *postcolonial* is a view point that resists imperialism – or relationships that seem imperialistic" (Essays on Canadian Writing 168)

The Eurocentric paradigms have been vandalised by this reformative structures of the postcolonial writings considering the indigenous conventions of a nation. European tradition is uprooted with a view to marginalise the British and bring the marginalised to the centre. It is an endeavour to celebrate the intangible assets of the cultural, religious, linguistic and social institutions that were submerged due to the colonial rule. It seems to be an act of amelioration after the emancipation of the British dominance. There is a dramatic change in the perception of concepts such as philosophy of life, attitude, behavioural pattern and value system.

Postcolonialism revisits the displaced cultural values of the colonised. The intrusion of the coloniser's culture in the age old traditional configurations of the indigenous culture has diluted the rigidity of the systems. The Whites had afflicted the colonised psyche to think that 'Europe' means 'Universal'. The modified mentality of the colonised people needs to reaffirm their status to be an equal one to the culture of the colonizers.

Colonization of countries in the world has subverted the indigenous perspectives of the nations concerned. The British proclaimed its status in the world as an unrivalled one and the establishment of its superiority over the period of years has anchored the aspirations of the British among the colonised countries. The British has succeeded in conquering the minds of the clustered classes of the colonised nations not only on social, economic and fiscal configurations but also on cultural fabrications. The postcolonial study focuses on the hybridity of the colonised countries in all spheres of life and literary pursuits in particular.

The metamorphosis has had an effect on such diverse facets due to the subversion of the indigenous nature of the colonised nation. The accumulation of the 'otherness' has diluted the practice of the age old traditions and customs of the natives and has attracted the common man towards the "otherness". The alien trends have been accumulated to be wiped out with the native spirit of the countries. Donna Bennett conceives in English Canada's Postcolonial complexities that "...postcolonialism allows one to focus on the cultural work those nations have done, or needed to do, in order to give birth to, or revitalize, autonomous cultures in regions previously dominated by externally imposed ways of perceiving, understanding and responding." (The

As far as the literary fabrications of African, Indian, Spanish, Canadian and Caribbean literatures are concerned, they employed narrative mode with a drive to uproot the fundamentals of eurocentred assumptions. The linear mode of depiction resorted to circular mode, the introduction of flashback techniques, the individuality of every nation and their own corpus of life, the fragmentary presentation of the incidents considering that fragmentation as very nature of life, plurality in every aspect of life - mosaic form, shifting, decentralisation of superiority by the emergence of another aspect, repeating with new dimensions and escalation of the lower order to the higher are some of the postcolonial perspectives in the writings of postcolonial literature. The presentation of totality of facts with time sense and space with a view to erasing of eurocentred models constitute the another vital perspective of the postcolonial writings.

The impressions of the colonisation in the socio – cultural framework exhibit themselves as the inseparable component of ethical, moral and metal paradigms. The stereotyped structure of the various domains neglect the ‘alienness’ of the British and accept the indigenous aspects of the colonized countries - Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand, Caribbean and Africa. The colonization stands to be observed on its heterogeneity, hybridity and stereotyped nature. The subjugation of the native soul - a common phenomenon in colonial era - is elevated to a state of elegance. The focused approach on the postcolonialist study determines the superiority/equality among the coloniser and the colonised.

The study on cultural denigration, human assault, psychic bondage, issues of Creolisation, in – betweenness and diasporas and social imbalance in the suppressed society exhibit the fact that conflict between the suppressor and the suppressed are inevitable state of affairs in a pluralistic society. The postcolonial literacy texts in common focus on the subverted minds of the native groups. It might be thrilling to explore the subverted cultural traits and reconstruct the native consciousness among the indigenous people. The imbalance in various levels has constituted the core idea of the postcolonial fabrication. The commonality of this pattern has been manifested in the colonised countries like India, Canada, Australia, Africa, Caribbean and New Zealand. The people were bifurcated based on colour, race, caste, religion and even other trivial aspects by the colonisers so as to deepen the chasm of difference and keep them under their clutches and in the shadow of ignorance.

As regards the divergent descriptions of culture, Homi K bhabha observes the cardinal composites of cultural difference and cultural diversity within the purview of postcolonialism. In ‘Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences’ he brings out the uniqueness of each character:

Cultural diversity is an epistemological object – culture as an object of empirical knowledge - whereas cultural difference is the process of the *enunciation* of culture as ‘*knowledgeable*,’ authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification...If cultural diversity is a category of comparative ethics, aesthetics, or ethnology, cultural difference is a process of signification through which statement of culture or *on* culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability and capacity (The Post – Colonial Studies Reader 206)

The exploratory tendency of the postcolonialist authors intends to abolish the Eurocentric assumptions and to vandalise the monuments of their supremacy through exerting various schemes. Further, they strive to establish the concept that ‘subaltern’ are in no way inferior to any other people in the world.

Universalism – one of the vital postcolonial perspectives – depicts that the myopic vision of the colonisers is thrashed by the wide and holistic approach of the colonised. The strategies

are adopted to ignore the hypothesis that 'European equals universal'. The inherent view of 'universalism' is referred in the Introduction to the chapter 'Universality and Difference' in the The Post – Colonial Studies Reader (1995): "The concept of universalism is one of particular interest to post colonial writers because it is this notion by a unitary and homogenous human nature which marginalizes and excludes the distinctive characteristics, the difference of the post colonial societies." (55)

Hybridity is considered to be a unique postcolonial aspect which gathers the scattered cultural practices of various kinds and presents them in a mosaic form which would attract the world very much with the heterogeneous nature of its presentation. The Post - Colonial Studies Reader observers in the Introduction to the 'Hybridity' as:

Hybridity occurs in post - colonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or when settler - invaders dispossess indigenous peoples and force them to 'assimilate' to new social patterns. It may also occur in later periods when patterns of immigration from the metropolitan societies and from other imperial areas of influence (e.g. indentured labourers from India and China) continue to produce complex cultural palimpsests with the post - colonised world. (183)

The postcolonial subjects such as Africa and India differ from the other countries - Canada and Australia – in the mode of experience they had during the colonial phase. West – Indian culture was of a mixed one as the inhabitants belonged to the various cultural bases. Considering the status of West – Indian literature in the postcolonial circumference, it is related to the position of Africa which has the rich, varied and antique cultural heritage and pride. George Lamming depicts in 'The Occasion for Speaking,' the multicultural ambience that prevails in the West – Indian with the borrowed cultures of the settlers from other nations as, "It is the brevity of the West Indian's history and the fragmentary nature of the different cultures which have fused to make something new;..." (The Post – Colonial Studies Reader 15)

The important events of British Caribbean history of three categories is also explained by him in the same essay in The Post – Colonial Studies Reader (1995):

1. Discovery – The journey took five centuries ago; and the result has been one of the world's most fascinating communities.
2. The abolition of slavery and the arrival of the East - India and China – in the Caribbean sea – the pleasant world – The second event is about a hundred and fifty years behind us.
3. The discovery of the novel by West Indians as a way of investigating and projecting the inner expenses of the west Indian community. The event is hardly two decades ago. (16)

Donna Bennett has observed in his essay on 'English Canada's Postcolonial complexities' that the writers from the indigenous group of Canada have no cultural and literary antiquities to include in their literary texts as the two postcolonial groups – French and English Canada – have excluded their cultural patterns out of the territory so as to hardly find the space for the indigenous groups.

Canada has now seen the emergence of a substantial body of literature by the third of Canada's three founding peoples, writers who identify themselves as descendants of Canada's Native population – a group without memory of any other home country. In their desire to maintain or recover a sense of self-identity, members of this group may have less in common with French – and English – Canadian writers than with writers from indigenous postcolonial societies, such as India or Nigeria, that were formally occupied by imperial nations... both French and English

Canada, while they may be postcolonial to a dominant Other, have played, and continue to play, the role of imperial power to Native culture. (The Essays on Canadian Writing 173 - 174)

The multi - dimensional postcolonial theory elicits to address a wide array of colonial practices in different parts of the world in different pace of time. The idea of 'dislocation' for the natives in the "invader-settler" nations constitutes this sort of 'dislocation' on different facets. Diana Brydon and Futures in 'Canada and Postcolonialism: Questions, Inventories' have focused on these sorts of multifarious perspectives of postcolonialism in Is Canada Postcolonial?

... it is also important to recognize a particular genre of postcolonial theorizing that derives specifically from the settler - invader experience. Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson remind us: "A key element in settler post - colonial theory is an examination of the processes by which emigrant European settlers 'displace' the indigenous occupants. This displacement took many different forms. It was physical, geographical, spiritual, cultural and symbolic. (363) (56)

Ania Loomba has explained about pathetic plight of the colonised that the European power practiced all the vices on the subaltern who had no voice at all during the regime of the colonial rule due to their location in the lower strata of social status. Ania Loomba in Colonialism / Postcolonialism flashes the cruelty imposed on the colonised:

Thus laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality are attributed (often contradictorily and inconsistently) by the English, French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese colonists of Turks, Africans, Native Americans, Jews, Indians, the Irish and Others. (107)

It was to exhibit the national and the regional consciousness by which the marginalisation of imperial centre took place. Though the texts were produced with the 'representatives' of the imperial power, the national / regional consciousness emerged as a vandalising force of the imperial institutions such as culture, custom, tradition, myth and rituals. The inevitability to use the medium of the colonizer seems to be another one. It was difficult to find out a suitable alternative for the language of the colonial rulers rather than adopting the same for the purpose of projecting indigenous traits. Thus the realisation of the themes of post-colonial literature seems to be a puzzled one. In the essay on 'Development of post-colonial literatures' Bill Ashcroft states, "Thus the first texts produced in the colonies in the new language are frequently produced by 'representatives' of imperial power;...The institutions of literature in the colony is under the direct control of the imperial ruling class who alone license the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work (The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures 5 - 6)

Canadian 'free settlers', Australian convicts, Trinidadian Indians, West Indian slaves are the victimised groups who experienced the sense of displacement in the colonial era. The yearning for place and the deprived shelter for them in their own land are the ambience in which they revolved around. This 'migration' has made them to experience enslavement, transference and the sense of the self has been destroyed by this cultural denigration due to shift. In the essay 'Place and displacement' Bill Ashcroft observes that "A major feature of post-colonial literature is with place and displacement." (The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures 8)

The emerging of post-colonial literary theory is intended to sideline the monocentric colonial enterprises of the colonisers on political and cultural fronts. The prescribed status of universality for 'European' standards by themselves needs to be examined with postcolonial theories. As regards Bill Ashcroft, "... the alienating process which initially served to relegate the post-

colonial world to the 'margin' turned upon itself and acted to push that world through a kind of mental barrier into a position from which all experience could be viewed as uncentred, pluralistic, and multifarious." (The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures 12)

Bill Ashcroft illustrates the major issues concerning the settler colonies and their association with the cultural aspects: (1) The relationship between social and literary practices in the old and the new; (2) the relationship between the indigenous populations in settled areas and the invading settlers (3) the relationship between the imported language and the new place. He observes:

The critical questions raised in these settler colonies cluster around a peculiar set of problems which highlight some of the basic tensions which exile in all post-colonial literatures. The three major issues they raise are the relationship between social and literary practices in the old the new; the relationship between the indigenous population in settled areas and the invading settlers; and the relationship between the imported language and the new place. In critical practice these are often inextricably interwoven. (Bill Ashcroft The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures 133)

The European settlers in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada struggled to establish their 'individuality' destabilising their European inheritance. This is in contrast to the Indian and African people as they began to retrospect their cultural and social subversions as soon as the European hegemony was uprooted. The 'imports' of the exit and the desire for 'indigeneity' also constitute the forum for conflict in the postcolonial literature. The arrival of the invader-settler countries to the nations such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand with their European shades to a land where there is a total difference or contrasting elements of culture calls for a rejuvenating process to establish their 'indigeneity' combining with the existing models of the lands. Bill Ashcroft states that the countries had become "...an important site of conflict within post-colonial literary cultures is generated, as the backward-looking importance of exile and the forward-looking impetus to indigeneity collide." (The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures 135)

In the Caribbean, the land was cruelly attacked by the imperial power on various stands such that the cruelty of colonialism was experienced by the Caribbean. The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures focuses on the magnitude of the colonial cruelty :

In the Caribbean, the European imperial enterprise ensured that the worst features of colonialism through out the globe would all be combined in the region: the virtual annihilation of the native population of Caribs and Arawaks; the plundering and internecine piracy amongst the European powers; the deracination and atrocities of the slave trade and plantation slavery, and the subsequent systems of indenture which 'stranded' Chinese and Indians in the Caribbean when the return clauses of indenture contracts were dishonoured. The present-day population of the West Indies consists of a variety of racial groups all more or less in ancestral exile, and all still subject to hegemonic pressures of their former European owners... (Bill Ashcroft 145-146)

Postcolonial writings intend to erase and/or rewrite the inscriptions of the White dominant culture on the colonised subjects. The authors of literary texts in the colonised countries use various strategies which enable re-construction of the effaced signs, symbols, myths and folklore of the countries that were under the European rule. It seems to be a self – exploratory process of the postcolonial writers. The postcolonial writings emphasise the social predicament of the diasporic communities which are marked by traumatic afflictions in the geographically dislocated regions. The struggles of the marginalised peoples to find their space and voice in the

midst of adverse forces are prominently employed in the literary writings. These writings, by presenting the cultural uniqueness of each culture, aim at the communion of cultures: respect for the other culture seems to be the first requisite for such communion in the postcolonial climate. The mutual admiration of cultures would create an ambience for peaceful co-existence.

The postcolonial literatures begin to establish their 'own' institutions which are governed by their own splendour of culture which were intentionally forbidden by the hegemony of the west. It is a retrospection of their individual composites of culture. "The dis/mantling, de/mystification and unmasking of European authority that has been an essential political and cultural strategy towards decolonization and the retrieval or creation of an independent identity from the beginning persists as a prime impuse in all post-colonial literatures/..." (Tiffin 171). The exploitation of "the other worlds" with the alien trends and systems of life had led to immersion of the native trends' of the 'other world' which were under the dominance of the western supremacy. The acceleration of the mono cultural thinking is challenged by the indigenous heterogeneity of the natives. Further she concerns the binarism between the two dichotomies of any society. "The dialectic of self and other, indigene and exile, language and place, slave and free, which is the matix of Post-European literatures..." (Tiffin 171).

In Canada, Margaret Laurence strives to reconstruct the 'lost identities' of the cultural groups constituting the Canadian society through her literary proceedings. Striving for social recognition, rebelling against the brutality of racial discrimination and experiencing the barbaric disturbances between ethnic groups are the core issues in the novels of Margaret Laurence. The theme of identity, exile, estrangement, ambivalence are analysed with emphasis on the ethnic diversity. Laurence provides the native inhabitants with an identity for societal recognition in her literary presentations. This paper proposes to trace the 'lost' historical impressions of the indigenous group - the Métis, in the folktales and songs of Margaret Laurence's The Diviners and thereby re-enact the conflict between the Sutherlanders and the Métis for subsistence and survival.

The Diviners evinces the strong desire of Laurence to exhibit the historical imprints of the indigenous group – Métis. In The Diviners, Laurence brings out the vicissitudes of the group which had experienced a great sense of loss due to displacement and dispossession in comparison with the people of Ghana as portrayed in This Side Jordan. Her stay in Africa, where she had finished her first novel This Side Jordan, generated in her a thirst for understanding 'others' culture. While she was in Canada, she wanted to venture into the cultural composition of the subjugated group – Métis – in her own land – Canada.

Morag, the protagonist's endeavours to establish herself as a writer and her daughter, Pique's search for her ancestral roots compose the core of the novel . The novel begins with the disappearance of Pique. Morag, Pique's mother - mourns the loss of Pique at the Dank house where she is accompanied by a water diviner Royland. Laurence considers the art of writing as the art of divining.

The second part of the novel focuses on Morag's life in the Nuisance Grounds, Canada. It is the place where the Scots - English live. Christie and Prin were the step – parents of Morag. Christie was the garbage collector of that area and his wife Prin was English. Christie was looked down upon by the people of that area and he was most affronted by the comments of the society. Christie tells Morag the various tales that exhibit the conflict between the two polarised groups for space – the Scots and the Métis.

Concerning Morag, she had to face very many humiliations in the society at the Nuisance Grounds due to her lower status in the society. When she had gone for higher studies, she met Dr. Skelton Brooke at the college and she fell in love with him which ultimately led to their marriage. When Morag was very eager to beget a child, Brooke resisted the idea as he felt that Morag herself was

childish in her behaviour. This misunderstanding between them resulted in total separation. Morag wanted to break this bondage and come out of the shell. She wanted to establish her identity by writing more novels and thus ascertain her capacity to excel in the field of her interest.

After her separation from Dr. Skelton, Morag's stayed with Jules - Jules was a Métis who was known to her even earlier. Morag begets a child, Pique, and after that Jules separates from her due to his own assignment. When Pique learns about her mixed parentage, she wants to explore her ancestry and goes west with the songs given to her by Jules when she was a child. Pique also reaps the sourness of humiliations on various occasions due to her social order – the Métis lineage. When Morag meets Raith, a Scottish painter, and when he refers to Sutherland, a place where Morag's ancestors lived for long years, Morag ascertains the fact Sutherland is Christie's own country. Morag however considers Canada where she was born to be her own country. *The Diviners* reflects Pique's quest for ancestry and Morag's acceptance of her roots in Canada, the country where she was reared by Christie.

To retrospect the hardships encountered by this clan – the Métis, Laurence has included several tales which present the historical occurrences: Christie's first tale of Piper Gunn – the escape of the people from the Bitch – Duchess; Morag's first tale of Piper Gunn's woman – reference to the courageous attempts of Morag - Piper Gunn's wife – during the migration. Christie's tale of Piper Gunn and the Long March – Piper Gunn leads the people to another land; Christie's tale of the Battle of Bourlonwood, Christie's tale of Piper Gunn and the Rebels; Skinner's tale of Lazarus' tale of Rider Tonnerre, Skinner's tale of Rider Tonnerre and the Prophet; Skinner's tale of Old Jules and the war out West and the Skinner's tale of Dieppe depict the conflict between the Scots and the Métis. These tales are considered for our analysis.

Christie tells the tales of settlement of the Scots and the Métis in Canada. A cruel Duchess had kept the people of Sutherland as slaves on wild rocks. The Piper Gunn played Pibrochs – music of the clan - while the duchess was in her deep sleep and in order to liberate them, he boarded the people on board a ship:

'CHRISTIE'S FIRST TALE OF PIPER GUNN':

Among all of them people there on the rocks, see, was a piper, and he was from the Clan Gunn, and it was many of the Gunns who lost their hearths and homes and lived wild on the stormy rocks there. And Piper Gunn, he was a great tall man, a man with the voice of drums and the heart of a child and the gall of a thousand and the strength of conviction. (*The Diviners* 59)

The ship from Sutherland landed on the Hudson bay. Piper Gunn and Morag began to lead their life there. There was a quarrel between the half-breeds and Indians and they began to slay each other. Piper Gunn's people began to move and landed on the Red River. When the half-breeds wanted to take over the governance of the place where PiperGunn was with his family, a battle was broken out in which Riel, the chief of the Métis, was hanged and the Métis lost their lands. A Métis rider, the Prince of Braves, fought for the Métis against the English and the Scots who had come to take away Métis land. And when the government men from Down East had come to occupy the Métis land, the old Rider Tonnerre sent a prophet who was also a Métis. The prophet captured the fort along with the people. Jules had joined the prophet in the battle for Métis. Though they were accompanied by the Indians, the Crees and the Stonies, they lost the war and Jules was hanged finally.

CHRISTIE'S TALE OF PIPER GUNN AND THE REBELS

Now Piper Gunn lived there along the Red River on his farm for more years than you could shake a stick at.[...]

(I like him, though, Riel, I mean.)

(The book in history said he was nuts, but he didn't seem no nuts to me. The Métis were losing the land – it was taken from them. All he wanted was for them to have their rights. The government hanged him for that.)

Metis? Huh?

(Halfbreeds)

(The Diviners 143 & 146)

It was narrated through the tales of the novel that there was a rivalry between the Scots and the Métis in finding a place in Canada. After a long struggle they both managed to find their own space, though the Métis were finally humiliated with defeat by the Scots. The settlement of the Scots and the Métis has been portrayed through the marvelous narrative structure of the novel. The memory and recollection depict the long drawn conflict between them. While Scots were from Sutherland – their own home place, the Métis were the indigenous inhabitants of the land whose primary occupation was to hunt buffalos. Their land was inhabited by the alien settlement – the Scots.

The Métis have a distinctive historical background, which accounts for their settlement two hundred years ago in Rupert's Land, the vast drainage basin of Hudson Bay. It was ruled by Hudson Company. The primal occupation of the Métis was to hunt buffalos to eke out their livelihood. There was a common bond between the Indians and the Métis; they had even a common language. Indians provided labour force for the fur trade in the Canadian West. Gradually the white traders and *voyageurs* began to marry with the native population – the Cree, the Salteaux, and Assiniboine. There was an increase of the mixed - blood population and when the fur traders were discharged, many remained in the North West with their Indian wives and families. Due to dark complexion of the French half – breeds they called themselves *boisbrules*(meaning burnt wood) The French group was generally referred to as the Métis and the English as half-breeds. While the Métis were nomadic and migratory, the English half – breeds settled down for agricultural work.

The Métis were deprived of their settlements by the forces of the companies. There were rebellious Metis men to challenge the autocratic attitude of the sovereign power This led to the Metis experience of the plight of hunger, pestilence, famine and prostitution. In 1960s, the political structures were mended with the formation of the Manitoba Métis Federation. In The Diviners, Laurence depicts the historical magnificence of the Métis:

The Tonnerres (there are an awful lot of them) are called those breeds, meaning half breeds. They are part Indian, part French, away from back. They are mysterious. People in Manawaka talk about them but don't talk to them.

(The Diviners 79)

The Métis had great reverence for their ancestry. The occupation of the Canadian lands by the Scots had created a sense of rivalry between the Scots and the Métis and a feeling of hatred towards Canada. While Morag, a Scot, sings the song in praise of Canada in school, Skinner Tonnerre kept quiet though he had good voice. The marginalisation of them in the socio – cultural framework of Canada had made the Metis resort to such behaviour while this was the position in Canada, the Métis are given prominent place in the novel The Diviners by Laurence,

whose protagonist finds fulfillment in her association with the Métis and Pique’s search for her ancestry leads her to know the historical elegance of the Métis through the folk songs.

In The Diviners, Laurence considers the Scottish community and the indigenous Metis community as equals. The struggle between the Scottish and the Métis dominates the folk tales of the novel and the songs in the novel picture the heroic endeavours of the minority group – the Métis - for the retention of the land of their ancestors. Snapshots, Memory bank movies, tales and songs depict the process of retrospection in The Diviners. They account for the historic documentation of the two groups of the people who strove to find their space in Canada.

The songs of Skinner in The Diviners eulogize the valour of Métis’ during their struggle for settlement and establishment of ethnic identity - the arrival of Louis Riel, Jules Tonnerre’s chivalrous confrontation with the Scots and the killing of Riel.

The Métis they met from the whole prairie
To keep their lands, to keep them free,
They gathered there in the valley Qu’Appelle
Alongside their leader, Louis Riel
They took their rifles into their hands
They fought to keep their fathers’ lands,
And one of them who gathered there
Was a Métis boy called Jules Tonnerre. (367)

Laurence presents the parallelism and contrast which mark the journey towards ancestral heritage undertaken by Morag and Pique. Morag accepts Canada as her homeland even after her search for her ancestry led her up to Scotland; she does not proceed to Sutherland where her people had come from. She considers Canada – the country of her foster parents Christie to be her own. While a question is raised to know her inclination towards the lineage she boldly drives her point thus:

Away over there is Sutherland, Morag Dhu, where your people came from.
When do you want to drive there?

Morag considers.

I thought I would have to go. But I guess I don’t after all.

It’s a deep land here, all right,” Morag says. “But it’s not mine, except a long way back. I always thought it was the land of my ancestors, but it is not”.

“What is, then?”

Christie’s real country. Where I was born. (The Diviners 415)

In contrast to her mother’s attitude, who accepts Canada to be her own amidst her search for ancestry to Sutherland, Pique is very curious in finding out the familial heritage of her own.

Some of the songs were presented to Pique by his father as she wanted to know her ancestry. She pays more attention to her lineage.

Unlike her mother, Pique goes out searching for her ancestry. She is not able to resist herself from this sort of expedition. She says, 'I don't want to be split. I want to be together. But I'm not. I don't know where I belong.' (The Diviners 373). Chellapan writes in 'The Quest for History and Fiction in Margaret Laurence's The Diviners':

[...] the mother and daughter represent the opposite movements of history and fiction, of ethnicity and national identity. Though Morag rejects race in favour of nationality as a basis of identity (Kortenaar 21), Pique does not reject her ethnic roots. (157)

Pique gets the sword of her father - symbol of her familial ancestry. Pique receives her ancestral treasure - a knife - that her father had used in war.

He fished in his pocket and drew out something. Jules' knife, the knife of his father Lazarus. Morag looked at it.

"Billy-"

"He wanted Pique to have his knife, that's all," Billy Joe said, very quietly.

Morag picked up the knife. The blade had been sharpened since Jules first got it, three years ago. The steel was, of course; perfectly clean. (The Diviners 472)

Perhaps the depiction of Scottish ancestry in association with the history of the Métis illustrate that the struggle of the past between them plays a very significant role in the union of Morag and Tonnerre, the Métis. Morag, the Scottish Canadian, sought solace in the company of Jules Tonnerre, the Métis and this union of the polarised communities paves way for the search of ancestral roots through their offspring, Pique.

The folksongs and legends are employed in The Diviners with a view to giving importance to the subjugated cultural patterns of the indigenous and the legends and songs in particular portray the historical aspects connected to the marginalised group - the Metis. D K Pubby writes in 'The Making of a Decolonised Mind: African Writings of Margaret Laurence':

A close reading of The Diviners convinces the reader that these folktales and ancient songs, which are so integral to Laurence's understanding of the otherness of Somali and non-imperialist culture by extension, become the foregrounding models for her later renditions of Métis oral traditions through Jules Tonnerre's legends and Pique's songs [...] (36)

The legends and folksongs in praise of the Métis bring to us the historical eminence of this group which was untold before. The narrative structure in The Diviners unfolds us the past and future of the Canadian landscape peopled with diverse ethnicities - the Métis, the Scottish and the English Canadian. Pique celebrates the ancestral history of the Métis settlement and the process through which they lead their life in their own land.

It is with a philanthropic attitude and an intension to create a sense of unity in future Laurence focuses on the past through legends and songs. Patricia Morley observes in Margaret Laurence: The Long Journey Home:

In The Diviners the haunting ballads of Jules Tonnerre, Lazarus, and Piquette catch the pain of this prairie people, while through Pique, child of Morag Gunn

and Jules Tonnerre, Laurence expresses her belief that white Canadians are inextricably joined to Indians and Metis in Canada’s future as in her past. (146)

Laurence describes the past with a view to creating a world of mutual understanding, love and fraternity. The historical enmity of the past between the two rival groups has been analysed and the possibility of union is also given as a solution for the established estrangement. The past is altered in the present to create a noble future.

The wounds of indigenous societies due to colonisation have been reconsidered as energy sources which will lead to the establishment of a new world order. The native spirit and voice of these clusters of people are given due importance with a view to enabling the colonised to understand and respect their own traditional practices and other ingredients of cultures and the colonisers to recognise the ‘neglected’ attributes of the colonised cultures.

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