



# PLIGHT OF NATIVE ABORGINES IN NORTH AMERICA

Dr.C.P.Ajitha Sekhar  
Assistant Professor in English,  
Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research,  
Chennai, Tamil Nādu, 600073

**Abstract:** The progress of indigenous women is very important for poverty abolition, attainment of justifiable development and the fight against gender-based violence. Unfortunately, gender discrimination and violence on women is a common problem in every part of the world. In spite of the various developments in all walks of life, cruelty on women is a continuing grief. Destructions of their cultural rights tend to create spiritual violence against aboriginal women. While the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples drew special consideration to the requirements and mainly, constitutional rights of indigenous women are called for action to defend them from violence. In spite of, more than one in three aboriginal women are assaulted during their lifetime.

Lee Maracle, a world-renowned Native woman writer of Canada, had authored innumerable critically acclaimed literary works which brings out the tribulations faced by the Canadian native women. In her writings, she addresses issues concerning aboriginal women of North America. Through her writings she attempts to achieve liberation of women from the age-old power and tyranny by men. In her biography *I Am Woman*, she focuses on male- domination and Native women's subjugation. They lose their individuality and identity and protest for their colour and voices of the people. There is a social prejudice between the Canadian natives and white people. Maracle emphasizes the Canadian aboriginal legitimacy. She says about the final journey of Native people which ends with liberation. She is one among the Natives whois brutally attacked by the intruders. Maracle concludes the Indigenous People need to rejoice their past because in doing so, it helps to raise their cultures. Celebrating their history stimulates self-importance in being Indigenous.

**Key words:** Indigenous, Aboriginal women, tribulations, discrimination, liberation etc.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The paper speaks about the sufferings meted out by the native aboriginals of North America. The Native Canadians were colonized for a long period under the worst

administration of the Europeans. The foreigners destroyed their culture and tradition. They polluted their environment and killed the Bisons which were considered to be the main source of food for the native Americans. The natives lost their land and were forced to stay in an unfertile reserved area. They could not cultivate and were denied employment. They starved to death. Education was denied to them and native women lives were the worst. The native children were forcibly taken away from their parents and hidden in residential schools run by them. These children were not taught but were forced to do all menial jobs. They were not allowed to speak their own language. The intruders banned their rituals and in total the aborigine's witnessed degradation of natural resources and introduction of new diseases which wiped out the majority natives and their livestock. The paper concludes as of how the natives have to overcome all their sufferings.

## Introduction

Indigenous peoples' beliefs and livings are inseparably linked with their traditional lands. They have traditional environmental knowledge and adaptive responses to environment changeability. Indigenous women, especially, are seen as the guardians and upholders of cultural values and as the supporters of their peoples' survival. Unfortunately, gender discrimination and violence on women is an everyday problem in every part of the world. In spite of the various growths in all walks of life, oppression on women is an ongoing grief. Effort to fight against this evil has been taken by a number of strong women. One such strong woman who powerfully fought against patriarchy and cruelty on native women is Lee Maracle. Maracle (1950-2021) is a world-renowned Native woman writer of Canada, who had authored innumerable critically acclaimed literary works like fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

In her writings she addresses issues concerning aboriginal women of North America. Maracle attempts to achieve liberation of women from the age-old power and tyranny by men. In her biography *I Am Woman* she focuses on male-domination and Native women's subjugation. Maracle discusses about the oppression of Native women and the anti-woman attitude of the Native men. Violence over Native women are explained with incidents from Native



women's lives within and outside their home. It tells us how Native women are tortured and why their role towards society goes unnoticed. It also discusses how Native women are considered as subhuman. She talks about her agony and miseries. She cannot tolerate the same situation under the white domination. She conveys the pain and adversity of Can America in her writings.

Maracle shows her innermost feel and forgotten women of the nation. She represents her desire towards homeland. She wants to get it back from the intruders. She expresses the situation of the Native and how they are raised with an administration of decolonization and discrimination. She says about her inner feel, "...for us racism is not an ideology in the abstract, but a very real and practical part of our lives" (IAW 4). She presents her pain and assault which are physical and fatal.

*I Am Woman* first published in 1988, also remains an influential book on racism and women's constitutional rights in Canada. Maracle challenges the inheritance of colonialism with the oretical accuracy and seeks to empower Indigenous women and girls. The book portrays her personal fight with womenfolk, values, traditional spiritual beliefs and radical power, written during a time when the struggle for freedom was not over. "My original intention was to empower Native women to take to heart their own personal struggle for Native feminist being. It remains my attempt to present a Native woman's sociological perspective on the impacts of colonialism on us, as women, and on myself personally". (IAW vii)

In the initial years of her political involvement the passion expressed itself as an infectious hatred for the system which demolished the lives and the families of the natives. Later, the passion develops itself as deep caring. "I battled publishing for a long time, not because I lacked confidence — the voices of the unheard cannot help but be of value — but how can one squeeze one's loved ones, -- empty of their form, minus their favourite colours and the rhythm of the music that moves them?" (IAW 61) Maracle states her desire that other Native women ought to come out of their spirituality, attitude and womanhood from male-chauvinism and racist impact. As a woman she feels that she and other Native women are confined by the social system menfolk have created for women. Their oppression results from the persistent growth of hurt over a long period of time. Maracle calls to "Fight back. Resist. No woman has to accept violence in any form (IAW 55). While talking about such conveniently made crimes she says, "In the home it is not a crime. What is worse, in our desperate fear of being unloved, good many women plead for mercy and accept responsibility for the beating and beg forgiveness for imaginary transgressions" (IAW 23).

### **Twice Oppressed Native women**

Moreover, Native women are twice oppressed. On one hand, they are tortured by their own Native men and on the other

hand they are side-lined by white women. "The dictates of patriarchy demand that beneath the Native male comes the Native female. The dictates of racism are that Native men are beneath White women and Native females are not fit to be referred to as women". (IAW 17-18) She explains how Native women are disrespected in common places. White women see the Native women as robbers in supermarket. They are humiliated and are considered as unwanted guest. The cashier asks them every time whether they have enough money to pay for their provisions. Every public place they come across great insult and are treated as an unwelcomed visitor. Maracle says, the natives have to fight back and retain their freedom. The total perception about Natives should be changed. One can wipe out the insult and humiliation from their homeland.

In the name of values and dogmas Native women have to be submissive to all kinds of oppressive behaviour from Native men. Very often the contribution of Native women towards the progress of the society goes unrecognized and unappreciated, as though they are invisible. In all organization Native women are found at the lowest level, "the least heard and never the leaders" (IAW 21). Native women have been considered both by Native men and by White men as of sub-humans.

Maracle points out that it is a common sight in the newspapers, when there is news of the death or murder of Native man are referred as Native man but in the same paper the ill-treatment of Native women is referred as female Native as though they are some female horses. Amongst such male-oppressed Native women Maracle, through her writings tries to demolish the male-controlled society. Along with her, there are several other Native women and men who attempt to re-form and rearrange their social setups. As she mentions in, *I Am Woman*, "there are a number of amazing women and men struggling to recreate and rebuild the political institutions and governing systems of the past" (IAW x). There is total destruction and natives suffer everywhere. Native women fight against male chauvinism and freedom. They fight back against the intruders. They seek empowerment in their own land. Maracle battles against the culture of colonizers in their homeland. Her work states about violence, upliftment and discrimination. She portrays the unheard voices of the Canadian Indigenous through her writing. The memoir *I Am Woman* concludes as of how Native women attempt to reconstruct their original culture in spite of their subjugation.

Lee Maracle's original intention in *I Am Woman* is to empower and free the Native women. She is aware of the fact that freedom is not easy and quite impossible. She sometimes feels that she is like an unwise young grandmother "armed with a teaspoon, determined to remove three mountains from the path to liberation: the mountain of racism, the mountain of sexism and the mountain of nationalist oppression" (IAW x). Yet she is positive in



reaching her goal. Maracle wants to become an author, not for the reputation as she does not like to remain unseen and unheard. She wishes to get up from darkness, otherwise she would be ruined through the colonizer's cruelty. She takes the feminist movement against the settlers. She fights to bring back the native power in their homeland. She points out "Racism is recent; patriarchy is old" (IAW 20).

## II. CONCLUSION

Racism and patriarchy are the two dreadful things which make everywoman to suffer in the society. Maracle dreams a world where women should have the right to live free from violence and discrimination and to enjoy the highest possible standard of bodily and intellectual health. She believes that empowerment of women is very important to the health and social development of communities and nations. Women folk has to come forward to raise voice for the calamities meted out to them. They have to empower themselves in every field with their inner strength.

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