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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**TRADITION VERSUS MODERNITY IN SHERMAN ALEXIE'S  
*RESERVATION BLUES AND THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A  
PART-TIME INDIAN***

**POST-GRADUATE THESIS**

**Prepared by**

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### KABUL VE ONAY

<b>Vian Ibrahim Hamad Ameen</b> tarafından hazırlanan “ <b>Tradition Versus Modernity in Sherman Alexie's Reservation Blues and The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</b> ” adlı tez çalışması aşağıdaki jüri tarafından OY BİRLİĞİ / OY ÇOKLUĞU ile Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalında YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ olarak kabul edilmiştir.	
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**Vian Ibrahim Hamad Ameen**



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**SHERMAN ALEXIE'NİN *RESERVATION BLUES* VE *THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN* ROMANLARINDA MODERNİTEYE KARŞI GELENEK**

**ÖZET**

Bu çalışma Sherman Alexie'nin yapıtlarını temel alarak Amerikan yerlilerinin yaşayan kültürlerini, kimliklerini ve konumlarını geleneksellik ve modernlik açısından analiz etmeyi ve karşılaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca gelenek ve modernliğe ilişkin kavramların tanımlanması ve yerli Amerikalıların geleneği üzerinde modern kültürün etkisinin analiz edilmesi de tezde vurgulanan konular arasındadır. Bu amaçla 15. yüzyıldan 20. yüzyıla kadar yerli Amerika tarihinin genel bir özetiyle başlanmıştır. Yerli Amerikalılar, modernliği (kültürel) kimliğin yanı sıra dildeki, dindeki, geleneklerdeki, eğitimdeki ve yaşam tarzındaki değişikliklerin bir sonucu olarak görmektedirler. Bununla birlikte; bazı durumlarda modernlik, özellikle geleneksel kültürün modern kültürden daha değerli olduğunu düşünen bazı yerliler tarafından kabul görmemiştir. Bu değişiklikler Yerli Amerikan kültür tarihindeki bir geçiş dönemine işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca bu araştırmada, yerli Amerikalıların sesi olarak önde gelen ve seçkin çağdaş bir Kızılderili yazar olan Sherman Alexie tanıtılmaktadır. Alexie, eserlerinde gelenekleriyle birlikte yerlilerin kendilerine ayrılmış bölgenin içinde ve dışındaki koşulları tasvir etmektedir. Dahası, gelenek ve modernlik arasındaki çatışma, Alexie'nin *Reservation Blues* (1997) ve *the Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Tie Indian* (2007) isimli romanlarında vurgulanmakta ve analiz edilmektedir. Özet olarak, bu çalışmanın temel amacı Sherman Alexie'nin bakış açısıyla yerli Amerikan topluluğunun Amerikan toplumu içinde yer aldığı durumu ortaya koymaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues*, *the Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Tie Indian*, Yerli Amerikalılar, Gelenek, Modernlik.

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BLUES AND THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN***

**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyse and compare the American Indian traditional and modern vision of living culture, identity and space entities as shown in Sherman Alexie's novels. The study begins with a brief overview of the Native American history from the 15<sup>th</sup> century till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, this study aims to define the concepts of tradition and modernity and to analyse the impact of modern culture on the Native American tradition. To this end, the study gives a general account of Native American history from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Native Americans regard modernity as the outcome of changes in language, religion, customs, education, lifestyle as well as (cultural) identity. However, in some cases, modernity has not been accepted by many Indians, especially those who think that traditional culture is more valuable than modern culture. These changes signify a transitional period in the history of Native American culture. This study also introduces a prominent and outstanding contemporary Native American author, Sherman Alexie, as the voice of Native Americans. In his works, Alexie portrays the conditions of Indians inside and outside the reservation, together with their traditions. Moreover, the clash between tradition and modernity is highlighted and analysed in Alexie's novels *Reservation Blues* (1997) and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007). Overall, the main aim of this study is to reveal Sherman Alexie's viewpoint of the Native American community in the American mainstream society.

**Keywords:** Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues*, *the Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Native Americans, Tradition, Modernity.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to define the concepts of tradition and modernity in Sherman Alexie's novels and to analyse the impact of modern culture on the Native American tradition. It also attempts to analyse the American Indian traditional and modern vision approach to the living culture, identity, place and space entities as life-partners. Native Americans regard modernity as the outcome of changes in language, religion, customs, education, lifestyle as well as (cultural) identity. However, in some cases, modernity has not been accepted by many Indians, especially those who think that traditional culture is more valuable than modern culture. These changes signify a transitional period in the history of Native American culture. As a result, the Native American traditions face the challenge of imitating the modern values that appear in the form of a change in the Native American mentality and behaviour.

This study starts with a brief overview of Native American history from the 15<sup>th</sup> century until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to historical and social researches, Native Americans are considered indigenous people of America. All the historical and social documents have proved that Native Americans possess an authentic special way of living culture. In this regard, the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492 signifies the turning point in the assimilation of Native American culture. American Indians' ancestral living culture has undergone the threat of assimilation process, which caused tremendous changes in their lifestyle and vision and most of their ancestral living principles and social rituals are either obliterated or erased by modern culture.

The study continues with Native American literature from its emergence until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Native American literature reflects their traumatic history. Native Americans possess a rich oral literature. However, they were illiterate and were unable to write down their suffering, but their traumatic history was transmitted orally from their ancestors to them. Storytellers played a vital role in delivering Native American social and psychological pains. In addition to the variety of culture and tradition among the Native American tribes, their oral tradition is in common. The oral tradition offers many ideas connected to their history and society. Oral tradition is a means of keeping

the cultural and ethnic heritage of Native Americans alive. Thus, cultural heritage can revive and boost the soul and spirit of the Native Americans. Meanwhile, their oral literature provides the new generation with a treasury of historical information.

A prominent and outstanding contemporary Native American author, Sherman Alexie (1966), as the voice of Native Americans, has the main role in revealing Native American community in the American mainstream society in his works. He portrays the conditions of Indians inside and outside the reservation, together with their traditions. In contrast, modern American society, with its new values and new standards, has depicted the clash and conflict between these two norms and values. Some of the Indians ignored their culture and their personal values by assuming new identities through alcoholism and stereotypical manners as they mixed with the modern society. Alexie, in his novels, demonstrates some problems that confronted Indians. He tries to awaken and warn them about the changes around them. According to Alexie, Indians can accept modern values side by side with their own culture instead of losing or ignoring them at the expense of one other.

As a postmodern writer, Alexie uses humour and wit in his writings. He exposes the tragic scenes of the Native Americans in modern American society. The clash between tradition and modernity is highlighted and analysed in Alexie's novels *Reservation Blues* (1997) and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007). The changes brought by modernity and its impact on human tradition and culture are explored by drawing the real image of the Native American society. In Alexie's literary works, the protagonists are portrayed as the true representatives of the Indians because when they leave the reservation, they strive to find a better life outside the reservation. In many cases, they do their best to survive in the mainstream modern American society. Due to the fact that both novels are set on and off the reservation, the research will shed light on the concept of reservation and its history briefly. In Sherman Alexie's novels, the reservation is the centre of the Native American depression and frustration; therefore, it will get a special focus.

*Reservation Blues* (1997) is Sherman Alexie's first novel. It is the story of a group of young Indians, three Spokane men: Thomas Builds-the-Fire, Junior Polatkin,

and Victor Joseph, who live in Washington. This group is guided by Thomas Builds-the-fire, who is the reservation outcast and storyteller. He rejects to live on the reservation and he is impressed by the satanic magic of Robert Johnson's guitar, which is considered to have some mystical power. As a consequence, he decides to establish a blues musical band, named "Coyote Springs". The group moves on a magical tour from reservation bars to Seattle and New York.

*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indians* (2007) is the story of a Native American teenager, Junior, who is from WellPoint reservation. He was born with the hydrocephalic disease, water in his brain, and extreme poverty. Alcoholism and violence enclose Junior's early childhood. Thus, this novel can be considered as the semi-autobiography of the author as well. Alexie has written this story using a dark humour technique. The protagonist, Junior, decides to leave the reservation and attempts to find out his new life and stay through studying in the mainstream of American society. He succeeds in his decision and consequently in his endeavour. In fact, the writer attempts to inspire and encourage the young Indian generations to move ahead and get a new identity by trying a new way of life in order to get rid of alcoholism and stereotypical life.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **HISTORY AND LITERATURE OF AMERICAN INDIANS**

#### **1.1 History of American Indians**

##### **1.1.1 The Pre-Columbian Period**

Native Americans are also known as Indian Americans. They are the red skin Americans and the indigenous people of America as well. They have lived on this continent for thousands of years. The archaeological search about the arrival of the first native Americans in North America is not completed yet. However, most archaeologists hint that these people migrated from Asia to Alaska, but the time and the condition of their migration still remain as the debated topic. It seems that some small groups of hunters first migrated to that part of the world eighteen thousand years ago (Waldman, 2009: 5).

At the same time, according to some indications, the arrival of these groups of people may have been thirty thousand years ago or more in several waves. During the last period, Ice Age, once the earth was much colder, moving from place to place was attainable by the distinctive environmental conditions. Throughout these periods the ice sheet of the planet retreated and progressed. The North American continent mostly consisted of those ice sheets twenty thousand years ago. The ocean levels were much less than they are nowadays because a lot of ocean water became an ice land and frozen into the ice. It was exposed that the land was typically under the water. For instance, there is a body of water which is known as Bering Strait, between what is currently Alaska and Russia. This place could have been a terra firma bridge or a cord of islands. It could have been a path for glacial epoch mammals that came after humans. Since the climate changed to warm and the ice melted, the level of the sea rose, and it covered the land bridge. Despite that, the archaeologists evoke that some early humans could have migrated to North America by boat. Also, they moved along the Pacific seashore into Canada and Alaska (Pearce, 2012: 12).

After, the arrival of those people across the continent over thousands of years, American Indians developed a large spectrum of civilizations, customs, and languages. With the end of Ice Age, the climate changed and the population increased. This encouraged many Indian American tribes to grow many kinds of crops. Some of them became highly skillful hunters and farmers. Gradually, they advanced their cultivating, fishing, and hunting experience. They lived their own style and protected their traditions. At that time North America was the best home to millions of Native Americans people that were divided into distinct hundreds of Indian tribes with different languages and traditions (Pearce, 2012: 13).

Archaeologists and anthropologists have compiled what they understood of the earliest Native Indian Americans from some of their bones and artifacts which were found in places such as campsites. This era of cultural development is recognized as the Paleolithic as well as the ancient Native Americans of that period are known as Paleo-Indians or Lithic Indians. It is proved that Paleo-Indians got fire, stone weapons and other tools, and had information on medicative plants. In addition, they were masterful in handcrafts such as baskets weaving, making nets, and so on. The Paleo-Indian Nomadic hunters dressed fur and covered themselves. They made caves their shelter and they dwelt, in a dense thicket, and in the remaining place of the mammals of the Pleistocene epoch. Over many thousands of years, Native Americans settled in their ancestral lands and progressed their particular skills which supported them to become adjusted to their surroundings. For example, Paleo-Indians used stone and bone as tools for scraping and chopping and for other different applications. Fire is one of the most important objects in their daily life. They benefit from fire to harden the tip of the wooden spear.

For Native Americans, this time was known as the Pre-Projectile-Point stage. Then they developed their crafts and started to use workable stones such as obsidian, flint, and chert which were the hardest stone. They can be used to shape the normal stones. So, they used these workable stones for sharpening choppers, spear point for hunting, knives, and scrapers. The Paleo-Indian period was reorganized by a kind of

spear point, that usually carries the name of the place that is first discovered (Waldman, 2009: 5).

The most famous and dominant culture in the Paleo-Indian time were Plano, Folsom, Sandia, and Clovis. They used special stone points as their special culture. These points could not be found on the Asian ground. They appeared only in the Americas, according to archaeologists. Clovis and Folsom cultures used flute as their points but Plano culture did not. So, they owned different culture and traditions. Plano culture had lived between 8000 to 4500 B.C. They were the greater user of systematized techniques of stampeding. Also, they live in a place without cliffs, therefore for trapping animals, they made corrals. For their daily food, they preserved meat in a special way. They mixed meat with berries and animal fat and carried it in containers and hut. Also, it is proved that the Clovis culture hunted megafauna. Scholars have found the Clovis spear points with mammoth bones in many places in the United States. It reveals that the enormous animals were really hunted at that time (Waldman, 2009: 6).

Archaic-Indians was another generation of Indians that came after Paleo-Indian generation. They adjusted Native North Americans because of growing larger food bases and inventing new techniques. They were active between 5000 to 1000 B.C. In the Archaic period, different kind of materials was used such as copper, plant fiber, ivory, wood, shell, stone, hide, antler, and bone. These were used to make axes, hammers, drills, fish hooks, pipes, mauls, containers, knives, and harpoons. Red painted culture was considered the most famous Archaic cultures. According to archaeologists, the red colour was the symbol of life-sustained and blood-lasted. Because they have found some Archaic graves were painted with red hematite between 3000 to 500 B.C. Some of these people evolved farming practice and creating perpetual villages with the help of gentle weather and high quality of soil (Waldman, 2009: 9).

The American Indians spoke the Indian language but every tribe had their own special language. Arctic people, also known as Eskimos, consisted chiefly of two groups; the Yupik and the Inuit. The Yupik spoke nearly five distinct languages, while



the Inuit possessed many different dialects within a common language. Aleuts who were another Arctic people, possessed a language with two different dialects, showing the impact of the fur traders from Russia since they were usual visitors to their land. The spoken languages throughout North America which were nearly 300 distinct Native American languages. Among the Native American population, there were many groups and subgroups of languages. Among them were, Uto-Aztecan and Hokan in the Southwest and Great Basin included Shoshone and Paiute. In the southwest and western subarctic, Athabaskan existed and included Navajo, Carrier, and Apache. Iroquoian group of languages which included; Cherokee, Mohawk, and Seneca, in the southeast and northeast (Kuiper, 2011: 12)

American Indians were innocent, artless or natural, and folksy, and they were not ill-will and evil people at all. They did not possess weapons for their defense. Even they did not know how to carry swords. When they first saw swords, they cut them into pieces from lack of knowledge. They did not know what is iron, glass, and gold. They possessed many handcrafts made of stone, bone, and wood. They made spears, for hunting, only from cane. So, they were like a strange creature. They all can be captured easy with no defense, as Columbus wrote in his log (journal of the voyage) "with fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want." (Zinn, 2015: 1). At the start, Columbus thought of exploiting their innocence and he tried to enslave them as well saying "they would make a fine servant" (1).

Rituals and spiritual tradition of Native Americans are based on environmental wisdom approaches. In many literary works by Native American writers, animals were mentioned and described as equal to humans in rights. For example; animals were hunted by Indians only for their food, and the hunters inquired license from the animals' spirit. Another traditional ritual is: the land was possessed in common among the hunter-gatherers. The concept of personal property or belongings did not exist.

In literature, the Native American ritual and spirituality are based on the pow-wow approach. Pow-wow was a traditional annual gathering party of Native Americans in Albuquerque, nowadays Mexico. In this occasion, the drummers sat around a big drum in a circle. They sang the pow-wow songs and the most famous

songs were: intertribal songs, grass-dances, honour songs, two steps, war songs, sneak-up songs, welcome songs, crow-hope songs and going-home songs (Fejertiene, 2008: 4).

For hospitality, they were the best host for their visitors and passengers. When Columbus reached the Bahama islands the Arawak men and women came out from the villages to the beach, because they were good swimmers, they swam in order to get a nearer look at a strange thing, big boat, for the first time. It was really strange for the artless people. They ran swiftly for greeting their visitors warmly and brought them food, gifts, and water for drinking. According to Columbus's writings, they were artless and natural people since they had only spears, balls of cotton, parrots, and many other things made of natural sources such as plant, bone, and stone. They wanted to exchange their natural goods with European hawk's bells, and glass beads. They did not dig out their land for such metals like iron and gold. So, their land remained rich with metal mines. (Zinn, 2015: 2).

### **1.1.2 The Columbian Period**

Christopher Columbus was an Italian navigation explorer in the Court of Spain. He attempted to gain the support of the Spanish King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella for his voyage. For rising the finance of the Spain Government and expand Christianity, he sailed to discover the fertile and rich land with gold. When he discovered the exact land with the strange population, he called them Indian people. So, he succeeded in his voyage. From this voyage and then he is known as both the Master Navigator and the Admiral of the Ocean Sea (Kneib, 2003: 1-6).

The Europeans as the best geologists and explorers, soon revealed that the Indian land is like a piece of jewelry and miracle for them. It was the land that they wanted. It was a beautiful land with mountain, hills, and rivers. Furthermore, the prolificacy and fertility of the Indian land attracted the European's attention. The rivers were full of precious stones and gold as Columbus described the land in his letter to the Spanish King:

Hispaniola is a miracle. Mountains and hills, plains and pastures, are both fertile and beautiful ...the harbors are unbelievably good and there are many wide rivers which of the majority contain gold. ...There are many spices and great mines of gold and other metals ... (Zinn, 2015: 3)

With the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492, the European conquest started. Indian Americans security collapsed as the Europeans brought in measles and smallpox with themselves. Furthermore, the Europeans copied the American Indians cultivating experiences. They were greedy to enlarge their wealth and power and consequently they increased in number. Some factors helped European to defeat the indigenous people. First, the newcomers could resist the diseases they brought because they had stronger immunity. Second, they had guns and horses. The Europeans outweighed the Native American arrows and simple weapons. Third, the European settlers outnumbered the Native Americans (Shoemaker, 1999: 1-2).

Thus, in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the Native Americans faced many wars with the European invaders and civil wars between Indian tribes, and slavery as well. Then, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, contracts were signed between the colonial power and the American Indians. After that, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, treaties were signed between American officials and Indian tribes, since the time has come to decide either the diminishing of endemic lands or moving Native Americans from their ancestral lands in order to mark out places where Native Americans governed and lived with restricted independence.

The act of Indian displacement was signed by Andrew Jackson, the president, on May 28, 1830. This process is called The Indian Removal Act. This act was an unparalleled legal plenipotentiary that empowered the president to sign contracts with the tribes in the east of Mississippi, eventually forcing Indians to relinquish their lands and move to the territories in the West and they built white settlements. The government forced the Native people, those who remain in their ancestral lands, to surrender great area of the land and move to the smaller or even isolated lands. In addition, the Indian Appropriation Act of 1851 approved the establishment of Indian

places what is currently an American state. Indians were once more compelled to manoeuvre to smaller areas of land currently referred to as the reservations.

The United States government promised to provide the relocated Indians with food and other things, but their commitments were not brought to completion, even though the Indians capacity to gather food, fish, and the hunt was greatly limited. They faced starvation, depression, and illness. During this time, the policy of the federal government and the white Americans' sentiments for American Indians generally consisted of a different combination of greed, paternalism, and racism. Despite moving to the reservations, Indians were exposed to an arranged plan of cultural obliteration.

From the mid-half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the government created the Indian Institute with the mandatory to brainwash Indian children into white American culture in an effort to uproot their tradition and their indigenous ideologies as well. In addition to separating them from their communities and families for a long time, the institution did not let the Indian children speak their mother languages. In fact, language is considered as the main branch of identity and culture as well. Henry Real Bird in his own definition of the Native Americans said: “An Indian is one who offers tobacco to the ground, feeds the water, and prays to the four wings in his own language.” (Fejertiene, 2008: 4). For the sake of tribal survival, learning the mother language typically plays a crucial role for adults in the community. Besides that, they were forced to dress American-style and hairstyle. In addition to this, they were inspired to give up their indigenous religion for Christianity and their authentic culture in general:

The Dawes Act of 1887 (also called the General Allotment Act) was created to further motivate Native Americans to assimilate into American culture. The act supported the American-held ideal of individual ownership of private property, rather than the communal tradition of indigenous peoples. Now, reservation land could be divided into allotments for individual Indians and families. The law also changed the legal status of Native Americans from tribal members to individuals subject to federal laws and terminated many tribal affiliations. (Elliott, 2015: 1)

The 20<sup>th</sup> century gradually presented some developments for Indians on the reservation. The regarding reservation policy of the United States started to swing around with the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Land management by tribal and tribal sovereignty was encouraged by the Indian New Deal Act. However, some new rights were outlined by the Act, but there were decreasing some other earlier special rights of collection properties. Despite that, the life trials on the Indian reservation stay a sophisticated national problem these days as Indian Americans still address the consequences of a bequest of forced displacement and the conflict to keep their indigenous languages and cultural tradition (Elliott, 2015: 1)

Thus, the Native Americans got colonized by the European immigrants. As a result, their originality was forgotten and they faced hybridity. Their culture and identity were under the threat of loss. Intermarriages lowered the purity of the Native American People. They started to use the language of their colonizers and began wearing their clothes. Consequently, the immigrants became more powerful than Indian Americans. So, the rate of the native people in society became lower than the immigrants. Even after independence from British colonization, the United States used the same rule and draconic policies to control the native people of the states. So, the Indian lands became open for the new settlers and miners to use them in the way they liked.

## **1.2 The literature of American Indians**

### **1.2.1 The Rise of American Indian Literature**

The Native American literature also called American Indian literature is the literature of the indigenous people of America. The literature of Native American usually takes the plural form as Native American Literatures. A question arises here: Why does Native American literature take the plural nature? Native American literature has got the plural nature since it roots from the plurality of the cultures and the diversity of kinds of written and oral literature which include the creative terms of

Native American nation in the United States (Lundquist, 2004: 1). Native American literature has two main branches: oral and written literature. First, it began orally. Next, it transmitted to written.

### **1.2.2 The Role of Native American Oral Literature.**

American Indian literature commenced orally. One of the most common cultures of the Native Americans is oral tradition. Oral tradition is the best definition to introduce Native Americans as Donald Fixico started his book with the definition of Native Americans and said: "Being Indians is telling and listening to stories about people, places, things, and experiences in a community of your relatives." (Fixico, 2017: 3). Native American oral literature is the reflection of Indian American history. It reveals a great relationship between literature and history. Indian American oral literature has the main role in preserving their history from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the time of the European colonization. In general, literature is one of the most crucial means of telling the truth about the past, particularly when the other means block off, as it can be seen in Native American nations. As remarked by Porter: "The great transformative power of Indian literature from any era derives in part from its ability to invoke a past with direct implications for the present. Indians, after all, are not just fictional, they are real" (Joy Porter, 2005: 39)

For the sake of their surviving identity, culture, and originality, the ancestors attempted to transmit their miseries and adventures orally, generation after generation. At that time, Native American nations were hundreds, each one of them owned their special language and culture, but the oral tradition was the common denominator among them. Thus, oral literature has a decisive role in Native American history and the first Native American literary text appeared orally. Storytelling, folktale, and myth are the main genres of oral literature. When the Puritans arrived, Native Americans lacked education. Definitely, the English language was totally strange for the Indians since they were ignorant of this language. At the same time, via storytellers, they orally transmit culture, nature, and history of their life intellectually.

The oral rendering depends on effective words and thoughts in order to remain in the listeners' mind for a long time and transmit through generations easily. As Ong argued: "oral cultures can produce amazingly complex and intelligent and beautiful organizations of thought and experience." (Ong, 2002: 56) Native Americans link all things in a credible chain-of-being. Thus, they make a link between earth, humans, the rivers, rocks, plants, and animals. The Native American literature shared numerous elements of bildungsroman literature, as "the term bildungsroman is applied to many novels of all times. Though it is not a dominant genre, it has a universal appeal because it deals with the universal experience of growing up or coming of the age" (Thamarana, 2015: 25).

The Native American texts draw the relationship of Indians to the earth and their life through an inward (spiritual) kinship with the dead and living relatives of Indian Americans. The animal characters such as coyote, fox, rabbit, raven, turtle, hawk and so forth, in Indian stories are conceived to be Native American relatives. The same thing is true for plants like squash, corn, cedar, pine, oak, maple, berries and roots. Animals and plants participated in history before and after the appearance of human beings. The history of plants and animals was kept in memory through oral narratives. Furthermore, oral literature is nothing less than written literature. Among hundreds of indigenous cultures of North America, Native American oral literature keeps its fullness in all directions of written literature. At the beginning of the mid-nineteenth century, some ethnographers and missionaries started to convert the native Americans stories from oral to written. They discovered that the attempts to mix two kinds of experience and expressions thrived unusually in a New World. Despite the central difference between oral and written modes of sharing and constitution, native American writers, N. Scott Momaday, Leslie M. Silko, and John M. Oskison, have made considerable attempts to intermingle in original styles components of both, oral and written, traditions (Armendariz, 2015: 139).

### **1.2.3 The Significance of Storytelling in Native American Oral Literature**

Storytelling is one of the crucial features of Native Americans culture. It has a significant role in Native American history, culture, and literature. Each Indian tribe has its own story and beliefs. For instance, the owl bird story was told by Native American tribe Iroquois. They live in wooden places nowadays in New York. They composed a fable, a literary genre of storytelling of the owl. The owl demanded beauty and wisdom from the maker repeatedly. The owl made the maker angry but in revenge, the maker lowered the owl's head down, rather opened eyes and a straight face. Trickster character is another common genre in Native American oral storytelling. Coyote is counted as a trickster character in their oral stories. The stories of trickster convey moral advice, especially for children. In general, storytelling became the means of inheriting traditional narratives. It supported Native Americans to find out their land and originality.

The new generation could easily become familiar with their ancestor's lifestyle, homeland, and how to survive in nature and the environment. It is just like a rich dictionary of Indian tribes' vernacular. Even these stories have influenced the Native American renaissance, particularly with the appearance of *The Names*, a memoir by Momaday. Storytelling also embraced dance, songs, poetry, and music as a means of linking the members of tribes and demonstrate their history to each other. Moreover, traditional worships are the best opportunity for assembling different people from different cultures and habits. They recount their adventures. Basically, storytelling was the crucial way for Native American to pass down the traditions and history of their tribes. Also, it can be considered as the seeds from which historians, instructors, and performers grew (Kroeber, 2004: 3-4).

Native American tribes protected, shared and could pay testimonials through storytelling. So, the coming generations could easily uphold the legacy of their ancestors. In addition to the ephemeral history of their ancestors and tribes from the Ice Age, storytelling keeps their culture and tradition alive. It can be also fruitful for



contemporary Native American literature. There is an obvious difference between storytelling and the written story. The connection between the narrator and the audience is more direct than the writer with the reader. As demonstrated, in storytelling "tellers and audience sought new meaning in old stories. Indian tellers did not "express" their subjective feelings; they exerted their talents in the service of stories worth telling because they sustained the health of their community" (Kroeber, 2004: 5). According to Jacques Derrida "oral discourse lacks the intricacy of written discourse" (Parker, 2003: 4). Indian storytelling depended upon livelier creative involvement in the story by the listener than what is required by writing the story.

In general, storytelling is an output of spiritual intensity which transmits traditional familiarity and information which moves forward and backward between generations: grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren. Stories have different targets of transporting along with knowledge; demonstrating virtues and values, making us recognize who we are? And giving a glance into the future. The power of words makes up the stories just like the paint used by the artist in painting a picture. The paint makes the picture to go through the human mind and root deep in our innermost as it existed naturally. When the storytellers tell a story in an effective way with effective words, this story passes from generation to generation. In addition, traditional information will be a part of the listener, and therefore tradition becomes a part of the coming generation (Fixico, 2017: 13).

Tecumseh (1768-1813) is the well-known president of the Shawnee who attempted to unify the Native Americans against the invaders' settlements. Tecumseh's speeches for his nations have become the best stories for generations after him. His speech in 1811 to both Chickasaws and Choctaws, Muskhogean people living in Mississippi, represents energy dismissed through emotions and effective and powerful language. This energy is the same as planting seeds. These two tribes cultivated their corn in their homelands in Mississippi. With the help of rain in spring after several weeks, the crops will yield. During midsummer, the people celebrated to welcome the new year, Green Crops Dance, and this activity is the celebration for good times and the medical power of herbs, plants, and the world that is beyond ours. This festival

was a good opportunity to distribute the traditional information and stories to the adults, the new generation. Thus, adults could find unseen documents about their people in the past. As Donald Fixico demonstrates and appreciates the power of storytelling and the style Tecumseh used that power from his own family. " My Shawnee grandmother, Rachel Dirt Wakolee, proudly claimed being related to Tecumseh. She said from time to time that we were related to Tecumseh" (Fixico, 2017: 14).

#### **1.2.4 American Indian Myths**

Myths are traditional stories which are told repeatedly and passed on through generations. Myths were first presented orally, then changed to the written form. All nations in the world have their own story of life, but it changes from nation to nation according to their nature or environment, religion, and history. It also changes due to their understanding of life. Native American myths tell the tales about goddesses, gods, and other sacred beings. These ancient stories were regarded as divine and true in the past. The primary purpose of myths was to elucidate the religious rituals, the origins of a community's customs and their mysteries of life.

Mythology is the study of collective myths and legends. Mythology had played an essential role in ancient civilizations and their cultures. In ancient times, the ancient Native American produced myths to interpret the arousing wonder and fear especially with uncontrollable and strenuous weather and force of nature like drought, darkness, thunder, and lightning (McKinley, 2016: 5). Analogies and similarities between myths and other traditional literary forms, like folktales and legends, are the reasons which make it difficult to define myths. According to Native Americans, the difference between myth and folktale is not the content but it is a matter of time since the myth presents the prehistoric stories when the world was formless and unshaped. Native American tribes have a big treasury of myths. They inherited it orally from their ancestors. It is divided into three main cultural regions: North American cultures, Central and South American urban cultures, and the Caribbean and South American farming and gathering-and-hunting culture (Dawn Elaine Bastian, 2004: 1-3).

Overall, the North American indigenous people mythologies included numerous frames of traditional narratives mixed with religion form a mythological viewpoint. Their spiritual stories are deeply rooted in Nature. They are full of symbolism of earth, sky, plants, seasons, weather, fire and animals. Even though the characters and details are different in accordance to region and culture, the general themes in their myths are classified into three major groups: trickster stories, creation and origin myths, and hero myths. For example:

The Bear is one of the most common characters in Native American myths. In some stories, he is friendly and intelligent. He appears as a culture hero, friend, master of animals, and chief of the underworld. He has been known to give power and heal. Bear taught the Oneida gentleness and strength, but at times he was malicious and perverse. Ceremonies and rituals centering on the bear were practiced among a variety of cultures, particularly the Algonquians; the bear was revered in hunting practices. (Dawn Elaine Bastian, 2004: 52)

### **1.2.5 Written American Indian Literature from its emergence to 1899**

The history of Native American written literature is equivalent to the history of European immigrants across the continent. The European settlement, exploration and geographic expedition, started after the arrival of missionaries that converted Indians to Christianity and educated them in English religious schools (Thamarana, 2015: 4). Samson Occom was the first American Indian who published a literary work in English. He wrote *A Sermon Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, an Indian* in 1772. In his work, Occom shows his eloquent skill in an attractive way to Indians and European listeners by way of a plain genre of the execution discourses. Besides, Occom illustrates how alcoholism destroyed Native American families.

In the nineteenth century, most of the Indian writers wrote nonfictional proses. They were publishing autobiographies, protest literature, and ethnohistories in reaction to Native American displacement from their own and traditional homelands. A very rhetorical example of Native American protest work is *An Address to the Whites* in

1826 by Elias Boudinot. He proclaims that conjectures and deliberations about the feasibility of civilizing the Native Americans have to end forever. Boudinot also argues that the Cherokees attempt to present how Native Americans can improve themselves (Wiget, 1994: 141). In addition, William Apes is one of the most effective Native Americans writers of protest in the 1830s. *Eulogy on King Philip* (1836) is one of his most eloquent protest writings. In his protest production, Apes confronts the inhuman behaviour of Puritans towards tribes of New England despite the generosity of Native Americans to the new arrivals.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some other American Indian writers wrote autobiographies for the sake of giving the reader information about the history and the life of Native Americans. Their autobiographical writings often contained effective commentaries and explanation on what the invaders had done to Native people. *A Son of the Forest* is the first biography which was published and written by William Apes in 1829. In his work, Apes joins the literary tradition of the ritual admission with the tough criticism of whites' attitude against the Indians. Another Native American autobiographical writing is *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-bown* (1844) by Copway. This autobiography was a reaction against the attempts of displacing the Minnesota Ojibwa from their ancestral homelands and give up their own lands to invaders in 1842. He mixes the European tradition of the confession and Ojibwa myths with missionaries' reminiscence, ethnohistories of tribes, and individual experience, a combination that characterizes whole later Native American autobiographies.

Native American writings changed according to their situations and political circumstances since they used writing to expose their traumatic history and pass them to the next generations. For example, in 1850s Indians confronted new intimidations, and it is mirrored in writings by Native American authors. When the European discovered gold mines in California in 1849, the number of immigrants greatly increased and it led to the invasion and settling in California, Native Americans authentic land, and the result was the Civil War. The end of the war carried new requests for their land, and it caused increasing westward migration.

By the end of the 1880s, the government obliged the Native American tribes to leave their homelands and move to the reservation by devastating the Indian food provisions the buffalo and kept winter hoards. As a way of assimilation policy, the General Allotment Act of 1887, lost nearly 60 percent of the land Indians possessed in 1887. In reaction to all these threats, the Native American author Sarah Winnemucca (Paiute) published *Life Among the Piutes* in 1883. It is one of the most powerful writings to record the effect of westward migration on the Indian tribal life history. Winnemucca could have been the first Native American woman author in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who published tribal history book. Winnemucca also criticizes the federal Indian policy and the agents who harmed her people or disregarded their requests.

With the displacement of the Native Americans from their ancestral lands to the reservations, their tribal traditional life completely converted, and Indian individuals adapted the western culture day by day. As a response to this adapting and converting, several Native American authors started to publish accounts of Native American tribes, their customs, history, and myths. For this purpose, the first work was *Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations* (1827) by David Cusick the Tuscarora. In addition to these, Copway's work which was first published as *The Tradition, History, and Characteristics Sketches of the Ojibwa Nation* (1850), and later on published as *Indian Life and Indian History* (1858).

The other Ojibwas writers also published works about Indians history: William Whipple Warren, *History of the Ojibway, Based upon Traditions and Oral Statements* (written in 1852) and (published in 1885), and Peter Jones (Kakewaquonaby) *History of the Ojibway Indians* (1861). Three other Native American authors wrote the ethnohistories of their tribes: Peter Dooyenate Clark (Wyandot), *Origin and Traditional History of the Wyandotts, and Sketches of Other Indian Tribes of North America* (1870); and Chief Andrew J. Blackbird (Ottawa), *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan* (1887), and Chief Elias Johnson (Tuscarora), *Legends, Traditions and Laws, of the Iroquois* (1881). John Rolling Ridge also published three essays under the title of *Hesperion* in the California newspaper, in the months of

March, April, and May of 1862. In his essays, Ridge wrote on North American Indians and observed Indians beliefs, history, and customs.

Native American authors started to write fiction by the mid-nineteenth century. In 1854, the first novel, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Marietta*, was published by Native American writer John Rollin Ridge. He was John Ridge's son, the respectful Cherokee leader. In his novel, he demonstrated the injustice practiced against the Native Americans indirectly. He focused on Marietta the Mexican folk hero. Although not particularly about Native Americans, the novel depicts how the invaders' unfair attitude of a Metizo main character pushes him to search for revenge against the race that suppresses him. The protagonist, Murieta, owns the nobility, gentlemanliness, and intelligence anticipated of a Byronic, noble outlaw.

*Wynema: A Child of the Forest* is the only novel published in the nineteenth century by Indian American woman writer S. Alice Callahan. The novel illuminates the effect of the domestic romance which was common in the literature by women of the period. Callahan integrates description of Native American and Creek customs and provoked fictional account of the events that reached to the killing of Sitting Bull and the bloodshed at Wounded Knee. In her novel, Callahan also inserts strong pleas for the suffrage and rights of women.

Simon Pokagon was the first American Indian novelist who discussed the issue of Indian life in his novel *Queen of the Woods* (1899). Pokagon tried to educate the European audience about Potawatomi traditional life before the arrival of white immigrants as well as about the sorrowful transformations in this life endured by the Indians after the white invaders deprived them of their home and properties, at the same time corrupted them with the abuse of alcohol.

### **1.2.6 Contemporary Native American Writing: An Overview**

Native American modern world of literature has emerged at the end of the 1960s. This period is called the Native American Renaissance. Andrew Wiget has a different point of view of the word Renaissance. According to Wiget nothing has

changed in Native Americans life conditions. Indians have seen the same suffering and endurance as he argued:

However, it might also be argued that the real beginnings of that so-called Renaissance are much earlier. Further, it might better be called a continuum than renaissance since the issues have remained much the same for Indians and Indian writers not just over the last two decades, but for the last two centuries. (2012: 295)

N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968) is considered to be the first publication of this period. Momaday's novel is accepted as the beginning of the new step and modern period in Native American literature because of its success as an important and effective novel. Momaday's first published work and its critical identification only presented to convey the Native Americans' expectation into open a wider and a sharper focus of that period and place where the production of Native American writers could be recognized. So, the recognition of Momaday's powerful novel has ever changed the atmosphere of literature in which the whole Indian American writers could exist and find themselves in this new world. Unexpectedly, when *House Made of Dawn* won the Pulitzer, it showed the ability of Indian American writer consented by the establishment of literature. Furthermore, Indian American writers could start to find that they existed and were not alone.

Unexpectedly, the likelihood of Native American composition as an option that is other than a separated and disengaging knowledge started to be a reality. Momaday's exceptionally obvious achievement and the manners by which that achievement impacted distributors to open their ways to other Native essayists specifically through the production of American Indian treasuries would be a huge factor in the development of a network of new Native American journalists. A large number of the authors after him have exhibited comparable scenes of Native American life and it appeared that Momaday is considerably more persuasive than in actuality he is. For instance, the main character of his first novel is an individual whose life is torn between "customary ways" and the "advanced world." This conflict can be solved by making a balance between the outside and the inside world. It is a way which later Native heroes

in books by Leslie Silko, James Welch, Paula Gunn Allen, and Janet Campbell Hale (to give some examples precedents) either take and in this way discover reclamation, or miss and in this way face demolition. A critic lacking learning of prior Native journalists or oral convention may presume that these essayists are replicating Momaday. In any case, huge numbers of those scenes and pictures had shown up previously. A significant number of the pictures and circumstances in the novel are virtual originals, to a limited extent because of the obligation the novel owes to the oral customs of the Southwest. Momaday, amazingly, has dependably been direct in recognizing his obligation to those oral customs. In addition, it is not so much that Momaday explored new territory as it is that he did as such numerous old things so well. Also, those things, those pictures, subjects, and clashes were, are, and will keep on being fundamental to Native American scholars and Native American life (Wiget, 2012: 309-313).

Thus, Native American writers from their early writings attempted to portray the misery and suffering of Indians. For many Native Americans, the turn of the century marked their dispossession of ancestral lands, the decline in birth-rate, and confinement to reservations. Fearful that their oral traditions would disappear forever as the tribal communities became more and more fragmented under the demoralizing conditions of reservation life, some native Americans began to write down the legends and folktales of their tribes, as well as their own personal narratives, in an effort to preserve their history and culture for posterity. Writing became a means to perpetuate tradition in the face of cultural disintegration. In general, the genres of autobiography and ceremony are very common among the indigenous writers as a way to record the Native Americans history, culture and traditions. Native American literature is a big library of the Native Americans historical trauma of genocide and displacement of from their ancestral lands and consequently destroying their native tradition and cultural identity as well.



### **1.3 The Concepts of Tradition and Modernity**

In this section, the two polar opposite words "tradition" and "modernity" are broadly discussed in a form of social alterations. In this study, the society of Native Americans is taken into consideration in contemporary literary works. Furthermore, some delusions can be seen in the understanding of these two concepts. It is inappropriate to look at traditional societies as unchanging or not advanced. At the same time, modernity does not stand against tradition. The connections between modern and tradition do not automatically include exclusiveness, dislocation, struggle. Modernity does not come to devastate tradition. Tradition and modernity try to form the bases of activities and ideologies in which the different opposites are changed into ambitions, but unfortunately, traditional society could provide support for, or even stand against, change (Gusfield, 2018: 1).

Tradition is the main part of culture due to its definition as cultural values and inherited culture. Tradition carries various words to a scholarly definition. It is defined by many scholars among them Edward Shils, an American sociologist, who defines tradition as "anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present." (Shils, 1981: 12). A tradition is a ritual and spiritual confidence. Tradition passes down through generations in the form of values within a group of people or a society. The tradition which is preserved in the present time has its roots in the past by ancestors. With the word tradition, the image of grandparents come into sight. Since traditions are regularly assumed to be unchangeable, ancient, and extremely significant and are demanded a rehearsal by the coming generations. In addition, tradition comprises the philosophies which are generally measured as valuable and socially expressive. Besides, tradition comprises religion, clothing, ceremonies, festivals, and food. According to Kwame Gyekye, a Ghanaian philosopher, traditions can persist and evolve for ages. He also argues that the origin of the word 'tradition' has come from 'traditum' the Latin word. It literally means to give for safekeeping, to transmit, to hand over. Like other scholars, he used his own words to define tradition as "anything that has endured through generations." (Gyekye, 1997: 219)

Undoubtedly everything has its contrast universally. By the same way, tradition frequently contrasts with modernity, principally the same in the sense of society. The concept of modernity is defined as collections of beliefs or ideas which are constantly moving forwards and developing as smooth as a stream. Modernity depends on an 'expressive' kind of statement in which each person in the society can have his own principle independently without taking tradition into consideration. Modernity proposes to an advanced power promising to release the human race from illogicality and ignorance. So, modernity does not continuously stand against tradition. It could not be considered as the way to erase the traditional values. Something in some societies became their tradition as a result of a bad economy, lack of education, or the absence of technological means. This rationalization occasionally has a harmful and dehumanizing outcome on modern humanity when it is reserved just for the record of evolution.

Urbanization is considered as the first phase to assimilate some traditions and adopt a modern style of life. For instance, an ordinary hypothesis in Euro-American bureaucracy has been transferring from rural places to the urban societies is one of the main steps to the era of changes, modernity, and to assimilate the people who own inherited traditions. One appearance of this hypothesis can be found broadly in the anticipation that Native women should follow a Western established standard just like mothers and wives. From the beginning of the 1970s to the present, the women from North Slope Inupiaq have been traveling to Anchorage in the form of groups to work. Hence, with the moving from village to the environment of the cities, the women from North Slope Inupiaq found themselves rescued from some of the traditional limitation and at the same time they confronted the conformity of Euro-American routines and conventions. These conventions frequently ran opposite to their own social convictions about mothering, family units, and sharing. Enloe calls attention to that the traditions, convictions, qualities, and desires for conduct shared as a feature of a social character are noteworthy at two dimensions. It is significant first at an individual dimension to a feeling of having a place and spot, and second, to a progressively public sense wherein individuals infer and present importance in their lives through connectedness

to and shared trait with their general public. As expounded beneath, these two dimensions structure a dynamic and intuitive setting for Inupiaq life (Fogel-Chance, 2018: 1-5).

Hence there, these two terms, tradition and modernity, are argued in a social field by the scholars of sociology. "When both the terms are discussed in a social setup, traditions represent the actual identity of a particular society while getting rid of them is supposed to be a sign of modernity" (Modiani, 2017: 98). So, both 'Tradition' and 'Modernity' are the same when studied from a social point of view. Hence, the only similar point between them is sociology. Conversely, the rest of the points between tradition and modernity are contrasts to each other. Traditions show the real identity of a certain society meanwhile discharging of them is considered to be a mark of modernity. Traditions substantially keep the members of a society unified in contrast to modernity which habitually separates humankind from each other. A tradition indicates an organized practice or method, confidence or norm passed down to the coming generation by the ancestors. Half of the human activity that humans do nowadays such as some of the social and religious codes, solace, condolence and funerary, has its origins in the past time. Modernism is totally contrasted with the philosophies or approaches of the traditions. Meanwhile, modernism is also important as human beings have to adjust themselves with the changes because humankind is really in need of this progression; otherwise, they will be deprived of the opportunity to have a part of any development or progress. The world must move forward and go on. Therefore, in every period and epoch, the incidence of the struggle between the tradition and the modernity exists (Modiani, 2017: 97).

Both tradition and modernity are valuable. On the one hand, tradition is the forefront but on the other hand, modernity will change some obligatory rules in human's life which are not appropriate with the present time. The presence of tradition is supposed at any rate as much an outcome of restricted power to outbreak from some of the authority laws, or it can be seen as a result of a wish to go on and to sustain rituals. Hence, human societies continue to use what they have inherited not due to the fact that they like it but because they could not endure without it. It reveals that

tradition can be changed over time at any opportunity. In addition, modernity is considered as a part of human life because it is connected to time. The person who owns a tradition and devolved on it and this person is also provoked to change it because it is not suitable enough for him, even though this person could not have the ability to express what the tradition has made him do (Shils, 1981: 213).

Modernity should have its roots in adopting new and logical things; and discarding meaningless and harmful practices or customs. It should aim to remove what is unwanted and retaining what is good in any tradition. In this way, modernism is not to do away with traditions but to modify it according to the changing times and people.

### **1.3.1 The Effect of Technology and Politics on Tradition**

Time could neither be stopped and nor be turned back nor changed as well. It always progresses and goes forward continuously. However, time moves futuristic uninterruptedly, the changes in human's life also are continuous. In the present time, all the nations and societies face the traditional changes and assimilation by the modernity but it is different from one to another. For example; nowadays many societies wear their traditional clothes yearly on special occasions or national festivals. They have made these clothes by themselves and the clothes are known as their handcrafts. Clothing is significant and mostly it is known as the mean to introduce one's nation in the festivals or as a symbol of the country. Even in this age of industry and technological progress, traditional clothes are worn by people. Japanese and Chinese have got "Kimono", their traditional cloth. "Kimono" is worn by man and woman in a different style. According to some writers Turkish people traditional cloth 'shalvar' wide comfortable trousers, is another example. Not only Turkish or Chinese and Japanese have owned traditional clothes but also all nations in the world have got their own traditional cloth. These traditional clothes are left in the past with the development of the industry. Traditional clothes changed and are replaced by modern global clothes like t-shirts, jeans, and narrow trousers (Kurt, 2015: 22-23).

The issue of the assimilation of culture and tradition does not stop and it moves continuously. Just as the science, technology, and political issues have the same role or more than that in the changing or assimilation of traditions. When the nation or the country is colonized by a mighty power, the origins of the traditional lifestyle of the colonized people will intermix with the traditions of the invaders. The traditions of both the colonizer and the colonized people are confronting each other. Since the traditions of both sides are considered new and modern to each other, the tradition of both of them will be an adopted one. The theory of post-colonialism has deeply analysed the subject of culture and traditions. The literary or non-literary books which are written after the colonial period reveal the impact of colonial power on the colonized civilization. The tradition of most of the nations in the world faced assimilation due to political issues. Many nations lost their inherited tradition as a result of colonial power. Native Americans are one of the nations who have owned a rich tradition which they inherited from their ancestors for many decades, but this authentic tradition now and in the future will be dominated by the modern waves which are brought by the colonial power.

Scholars and theorists of the social sciences like Freud, Darwin, and Marx, who are significant philosophers in modern society, attempted to think about the reality of modern culture and the inherited culture in the different societies. The idea of these famous scholars has a special influence on the understanding of modern society with all its cultural and traditional aspects. According to Charles Darwin's theory, human beings and all the other creatures are descendants of common ancestors, and variations in their heritable features are affected by natural selections. He also argues that such characteristics can either die or survive in the genetic population in relation to their contribution to the existence of the species.

Karl Marx is another prominent theorist whose views can be interrelated to the social, political, and cultural metamorphoses. Even though many scholars and critics of Marx agree that Soviet Marxism has departed from the democratic compulsion at the crux of Marx's works, yet his great impact on Lenin's Bolshevism cannot be denied. However, Marx's work which profoundly pays attention to the organization of society

from economic terms still is the focus of the current discussion in the wake of the recent financial crisis.

If Darwin's theory argued that all the beings on the Earth developed by means of natural selections, Marx's theory is concerned with the economic, political and social status. Then he wrote two great works *Das Kapital* (2012) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1964) which paved the way for presenting social and economic dynamics in a new way.

In general, the works of these theorists reveal the profound influence of thought and intellect on the values and culture of humankind. In this era, the ideas of these thinkers are still prominent, especially in Western society. Darwin's theory of evolution is magnificent in many ways. Marx's work showcases the profound power of money and wealth in society and history. All these works are significant in the development of "modernity" in the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, technological developments proved the fact that the developments are beyond the traditions.

### **1.3.2 Native American Traditions and the Colonial Power**

After years of contact and trade, the impact on the lives of all the indigenous people of America began slightly. Changes in the religious traditions of the indigenous peoples of America commenced. This change can be observed in the way of the indigenous mythological stories tackle the presence of the European people.

The Creation stories now claim that Mother Earth created various coloured human beings, compared to Americans. The individuals from Creek tribe appealed that it was due to the fact that the Creator first created the European people, that is why they were coloured and Native Americans were created after the Europeans, hence why they were brown. So, according to the Creation stories the first created nations possess the fair colour.

The indigenous people in America were dependent on European belongings bought from the credit, by the 17<sup>th</sup> century so as to better trading negotiation terms or

keep the debts collected because of over-buying. Since in the poor hunting season, they cannot pay for the goods, the Native Americans occasionally had to give in high spiritual regard to land as well. After that, when the flow of Europeans started to arrive and expand their settlements, they were less interested in the Indian trade and much more interested in acquiring Indian land by any means needed.

Converting Native Americans to Christianity is one of the proper ways to accomplish colonial aims. Group Missionaries from Europe arrived in America. They started to convert the Native Americans to Christianity and some of the indigenous people from the Cherokee tribe were converted voluntarily. A young woman aged 17, Catherine Brown, began to study the ways of the colonialists in converting people as an attempt to stem the tensions between her people and the Europeans. Catherine decided to go to a missionary school in order to use the basis of religion for dialogue with one another.

She highlighted the similar symbols between her own inborn beliefs and those of the colonialists in her attempt to learn more about Christianity. She revealed that Moses, who received the Ten Commandments on a mountain, and Jesus, who preached his most significant sermon, reverberated in a small but different way with her tradition of Cherokee tribe, in which the gods of Thunder were thought to exist and live in the mountains. One more example was when Jesus wandering in the wilderness on a spiritual journey and an ill Cherokee fighter on his way in the forests confronting a monster. Moreover, the similarity in spiritual beliefs in both religions encouraged the Native Americans to convert to Christianity. Some other people from Lakota tribe tried to reconcile their native spiritual beliefs and Christianity since similarities can be seen between both religions. Therefore, it is easier for the Native Americans to convert, if not entirely, at least partly, although some basics of their beliefs are still preserved.

The attraction to Christianity was more practical but not so spiritual for other indigenous people in America. For missionaries, the process of conversion was seen as a mean to respect them, because it is recognized by powerful whites and good education. According to Native American historical and contemporary literature, the main aim behind the sending of missionaries from Europe to America to convert the

native people's religion, was mostly to mix the indigenous people into the dominant culture of Europeans. It reveals religion used as the way to end the native culture and wholly abolish their inherited traditions.

Another new way used by the invaders to achieve this cultural dominance was to massacre large numbers of indigenous people to reduce resistance and they obliged them to leave their ancestral homeland. Children were also the victims of the strategy of cultural domination by the colonialist, even though they were regarded as less of a risk to the mainstream European culture. The Native American children were prohibited from speaking in the mother languages to cut their link with their ancestral culture. In addition to this, they had to be separated from their society and to be located in a place far from their family in order to diminish the impact of their parents and to lessen their chance of living and surviving in the Native American community (Dalal, 2011: 3-5).

Even in literature, the writers and novelists focused on both themes of tradition and modernity in their own and other societies. Sherman Alexie, a Native American author is one of the writers who shed light on the authentic tradition of Native Americans, as a dominant tradition, in the modern society of the United States of America.



## CHAPTER II

### SHERMAN ALEXIE: THE REAL VOICE OF AMERICAN INDIANS

#### 1. Sherman Alexie: Life and Career

Understanding Sherman Alexie's life from early childhood until now, is a significant way to understand his works and Native American society in the past and in the current time as well. Sherman Alexie is a prominent contemporary native American author. He was born on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Welpinit, Washington on October 7, 1966. Despite the hydrocephalic disease, water in his brain, from his birth, Alexie could read by the age of three. He read Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* by the age of five. By the age of six, he confronted a brain surgery and he survived. In the middle of his academic concern in reading and abnormal physical challenges, he was an easy target among his friends. In addition to this, he is from a poor Indian American family. His life was filled with tragedy and poverty. His father, Sherman, was a Coeur d'Alene Indian. He sometimes worked as a driver of trucks and as a logger chopped the woods. He was an alcoholic addict. His mother was a Spokane Indian woman who was doing two jobs at the same time. In order to support Alexie and his brothers and sisters, she scraped money by working as a clerk and doing sewing. His sister and her husband were killed when he was in the eighth grade. This accident affected Alexie severely (Grassian, 2005: 1).

Alexie's early life was manifested by uncountable therapies and treatments, as well as being one of six kids alive on a reservation. He was one whose life was filled with suffering from poverty and many other tragedies. Despite that, his parents were alcoholic addicts. All these tragedies have served as a recurring motif in Alexie's writing. According to Alexie, grief can be changed and it can even get smaller but never ends. Grief in Alexie's life rolled as the main character to attempt him think of a way to find life off the reservation. His parents and Alexie as well, decided that the best way for him was to enter high school outside of the Indian reservation in the White's society. It revealed that life in the reservation was in aggravating circumstances and rehabilitation. These circumstances motivated Indians to escape

from their society to the mainstream and modern American society. For this reason, Alexie decided to live and get educated off the reservation. Thus, he could find a comfortable place in a new environment (Webb, 2014: 1-2).

He graduated from Reardan High School, then he could get Gonzaga University scholarship. Before graduating from Washington State University in Pullman in 1991 with an academic degree in American Studies, he attended the Gonzaga University. In Washington State University, Alexie registered his first creative writing class, where he was influenced and encouraged by Professor Alex Kuo. Via his Professor, he found himself in strong connection with the poetry of contemporary Native American writers and poets such as Joy Harjo, Simon Ortiz, James Welch, Adrian Louis, and Leslie Marmon Silko, whom he refers to them alongside Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson as poets who influenced him most. Thus, he started his literary works as a poet and then turned to fiction writing (Velie, 2007: 9).

Alexie is a contemporary novelist, short story writer, poet, and filmmaker. He is known as the most recent Native American literary star. He has already written twenty-six books. Alexie has published 16 texts in twelve years and produced two films. He started with two books, collections of poetry and blended few short prose pieces, *I Would Steal Horses* (1992), and *The Business of Fancydancing* (1992). Later, he published two books, *First Indian on the Moon* (1993), *Old Shirt and New Skins* (1993). *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993) is his first collection of short stories. This book was the source of blessings for him. He got recognized nationally. He gained the respected *PEN/Hemingway* Award for Best First Book of Fiction and earned the Lila Wallace *Reader's Digest* Writers Award as well. His publisher encouraged him to write a novel. Then, he continued to write full-length fiction. He published his first well-known novel *Reservation Blues* (1995). A year later, he published his second novel *Indian Killer* (1996). For his novels, he gained the *Granta* award of the Best of Young American Novelist, the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award, and the Murray Morgan Prize. He also received the *People's Best of Pages* award and *New York Times* Notable Book recognition. He

wrote additional works: *Ten Little Indians* (2003) is his latest collection of best short stories, which included nine valuable short stories. Washington State awarded him the Regent's Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2003. In 2007 he published *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, an autobiographic novel. The protagonist grows up in the Indian reservation and got educated in the mainstream American society as the writer himself. It is exactly a semi-biography of Alexie (Grassian, 2005: 4-5).

## **2. Alexie's Style and Techniques in His Fictional Works**

### **2.1 Alexie as Non-traditional Author**

Sherman Alexie is known as a non-traditional Native American author. The sacred theme is one of the most popular tradition in Native American literature which is used widely by many Indian writers. Opposite to this, sacred theme as traditional writing is refused by Alexie. According to Alexie the time of sacred things is flown, in the present time Native Americans are in the modern age and they confronted many problems in the modern mainstream. As he argued in an interview: "...the sacred things in my tribe. I don't write about them ever. Some Indian writers do, and a lot of non-Indian writers writing about Indians do. I don't write about those, that is... forbidden." (Alexie, 1996: 187)

Moreover, he focuses on modern issues in Native American society. Alexie is a postmodern writer and appears as an exception among the other Native American writers, due to the fact that he does not do anything with oral tradition. However, the period of his writings goes further than the oral tradition. Oral tradition is a distinctive tradition in literary writings which is used by many Indian American writers. At the same time, Alexie exposed that all his writings are typed by himself. In this case, how could it be regarded as or influenced by the oral tradition? Arnold Krupat argued that nowadays Native American author writing has never stated any kinds of appreciation and faithfulness to the predominant oral tradition. Krupat's aim is to highlight on Alexie's work indirectly. According to Krupat these works emerged under the shadow of postmodernism and postcolonialism. Similarly, Alexie emphasizes that there is a strong relationship between the effect of colonial history and his writings.

Furthermore, he declares that he is a colonized man and he has to write as a colonized one. So, by his refusing to use oral tradition, he wants to make a distance between himself and the authors of Indian American renaissance (Newton, 2001: 413-414).

The mixture of cultures and the resulting transmutations are one of Alexie's concerns. In this respect, he is not so far from Leslie Marmon Silko, a Native American writer who commonly contrasts with Alexie by critics. Silko has a different view to the Native American rituals. Moreover, Silko exposes that, rituals must grow to sustain their effectiveness. For the sake of promoting growth and change, Alexie attempts to put all his fictions squarely in a Native American literary tradition. Continually composing with sharp recorded mindfulness, Alexie changes past conventions – in the case of moving, drumming, or narrating – to fit a changing world reality. Alexie says his fictions don't try to restore a past legacy, but instead to depict its reality in the present. As Sherman Alexie responds in an interview, which is quoted by Coulombe, and states:

I'm not talking about four directions corn pollen mother earth father sky shit. I'm not talking about that stereotypical crap about being Indian. There's always a huge distance between public persona and private person. In my art I try to keep that as narrow as possible. I try to write about the kind of Indian I am, the kind of person I am and not the kind of person or Indian I wish I was. (qtd. 2011: 128)

In this manner, Alexie's writings outline that the Indians not only confronted the realities of harsh cultural situation but also the strength and arrogance that maintain them.

Notwithstanding Alexie's positive portrayals of renewal and change, he no more supports the unchecked approval of mainstream culture, instead, he will suggest the insignificance of past cultural traditions. For instance, Alexie reveals the occasional grotesque distortions, which is the result of mixed cultures. The misogynist refused and angered with the unknown mother and wife, who is a woman protagonist. He also argued that the Indian society faced, and was assimilated into the gender

discrimination and misogyny in the modern white culture. *The Fun House*, one of the powerful short stories by Alexie in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, uncovered how whites damage Indians and their culture, and the weaknesses in white culture. For these changes in culture and tradition of Native Americans, Alexie supposes that not only white America is the original cause but also the Indians are blamed (Coulombe, 2011: 128).

Alexie is criticized by some critics for blaming the whites. As Owen exposes that Alexie accuses white culture again and again without certain evidence. As he argued, "No one is really to blame but the Indians, no matter how loudly the author shouts his anger" (Owens, 1998: 80). Owen thinks that the Indians themselves are the cause of their own failure. He reveals that Alexie himself blames the Indians since in his writings he accuses Indian people as drunken and careless.

Contrarily, Alexie criticizes the United States government in *The Fun House*, for the woman's suffering from cleansing program enact: "The doctor tied her tubes, with the permission slip my aunt signed because the hospital administrator lied and said it proved her Indian status for the BIA" (Alexie, 2013: 81). In this vein, he emphasizes to accuse the modern society which systematically oppressed on the Indian people rights for hundreds of years. Despite the fact that white Americans has frequently shaken their head over the iniquities of the remote past, few of them try to recognize the present unlawful and immoral machinations. Similarly, *The Trial of Thomas Builds-The-Fire* highlights slaughters committed against Indians. A court docket scenario allows Thomas to tell Indians about a chain of white crimes tales, including lynching, massacres and thefts. It ends when Thomas being sent to prison with " four African men, one Chicano, and a white man from the smallest town in the state" (Alexie, 2013: 103). Alexie shows the negative reality of modern justice in the United States of today: the system of face colour, the poor, especially poor in colour, racism, inequality, cultural trauma, and oppression that Indians confronted in the modern American society and how Native Americans have remained so for a long time. (Coulombe, 2011: 129).

For Native Americans, assimilation has never ended with the era of coloniality. Nowadays modern society is easily interfering the authentic traditions of Native Americans through tourism, movements of the New Age, exploitation and modern developments. With the wave of modernity, what little remains of the identity, religion, and language of the indigenous is also facing eradication. It reveals that the impact of modernity on Native American tradition is more dangerous than the impact of coloniality. In the case of coloniality, some of the authentic traditions remain and are kept by the indigenous people against their enemy. Alternatively, modernity intermingles with the human being's blood and daily life as well. In this manner, advancement ought to have its foundations in receiving new and consistent; and disposing of inane and unsafe practices or traditions. It should point in evacuating what is undesirable and holding what is great in any custom. Along these lines, innovation is not to get rid of customs yet to alter it as per the changing occasions and individuals (Modiani, 2017: 105).

The modern wave, the rise of New Age spiritualists and tourism are considered as threats to the indigenous people's tradition especially religion. These movements are seeking to destroy the practices and traditions of Native American people. As argued by Neizen, "Misinterpretation, decontextualization, and popularization of native ceremonies are causing serious disruptions in local practice" (Niezen, 2000: 7). New Age movement people is a kind of efforts by the white people. They attempt to assimilate Native American into different religions or at least to "become Indian" superficially through workshops at weekends or to make a profit. The indigenous peoples were even more guarded and practiced religious ceremonies in private so that they are not further corrupted or lost by indigenous people. Moreover, in this view, New Age movement becomes another kind of spiritual interference, another process of ritual profanation, self - conscious appropriation and change in the spiritual lives of indigenous peoples (Niezen, 2000: 7).

Alexie and numerous other local creators respect the New Age development with doubt, seeing it as misinformed endeavour with respect to white individuals to usurp Native culture to a great extent for their own narrow-minded purposes. Along

comparative lines, Alexie will not submit to standard norms for a watered-down, romanticized form of Native American writing. He is resolved to remain savagely autonomous, without taking into account a particular group of onlookers, aside from in his longing to enable his crowd to consider the issues he expounds on, regardless of whether his situations on those issues are radical, aggravating, and fierce. "I've gone to the acknowledgment," he keeps up, "that numerous individuals have been perusing artistic fiction for a similar reason they read standard fiction: for amusement and a type of break. I would prefer not to compose books that give individuals that. I need books that challenge, outrage, and conceivably annoy (Grassian, 2005: 14).

These efforts to assimilate native traditions by non-native American peoples and the others from different Western European cultures are now attempting to absorb aspects of the indigenous tradition. Due to the absence of tradition in these modern and non-traditional society people's life again causes the disruption of tradition and culture to Native American peoples. For the indigenous peoples of the Americas, it is like history echoing itself, bringing another modern wave of cultural and spiritual genocide. Furthermore, modern threats are affecting the indigenous peoples, beyond those of colonization (Dalal, 2011: 7-9).

The identity of Native Americans is coloured with "humanity" that connects Indians with sacred traditions, shared history as Native people, and places. Besides, language is considered as an essential segment of identity. Additionally, learning indigenous languages is very important for tribal survival, particularly for young people in a community. Hence, language is the core of authentic traditions. Modern developments especially television has an effective influence on the Native language (Fejertiene, 2008: 4).

New generations, especially children spend most of their time in front of technological media. Through screens, they soon and easily adapt the foreign words. Even though, they are keen on learning different languages so much proudly rather than their native language. Sherman Alexie declares that he wants to reach the children in the Native American reservation. The kids are influenced by the popular culture of the white. So, modern development has dual influences. It changes according to how

new generation use it. It can lose and delete man's own properties. At the same time, it can be used to save and preserve these properties. According to Alexie, media has the main role for Native American children to keep in mind their traditions. So, Alexie frequently uses orientations to television shows, music and movies as resources to attract their attention and to familiar speaking in their native language (Grassian, 2005: 6).

The Native American authors, through their characters, take part in the renewal of Native American's self-representation. And this is an encounter of both the prejudiced old context and the conquest descriptions which are continued by the ever-present white man's Indian. Literary works of James Welch, Louise Edrich, Louis Own and in particular Sherman Alexei's works depict the Native' American's self-representation in a way that inquiries and revises those dominant narratives and the misrepresentations of the native Americans. The contemporary Native American authors are mainly preoccupied with their nation's misrepresentation in movies and television. This is due to the fact that the prevailing white culture has shown a negative image of Native Americans in the mass media. Such a negative portrayal of Native American is clearly seen in *Dance with the Wolves* which was directed by Kevin Costner.

Native Americans not only confronted the colonial assimilation but also the modernity as a risk on their history and traditions. The Native authors reply to the risk facing the Indian American cultural identity. With the Hollywood critiques, Churchill argues that the film industry is consistently evaluated as a destructive and corrupt effect on Native America's real background. Increasing references to the destructive presence of television on the fictional reservation of Alexie indicates that this Euro - American technology is an iconographic evil that Spokane must fight against (Cox, 1997: 52-56).

Sherman Alexei in his works: *The Lone Ranger* and *Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* critically responses to the dominant culture. Alexei's response is more radical than those given by Welch, Edrich and Owen. He explains how these narratives have put his characters in jeopardy. He further rephrases and undermines them. *The Lone*



*Ranger*; the radio and television program, can be classified as a conquest narrative. This is because it depicts Tonto as the servant of the white master. According to Alexei's revision, Tonto rejects to be the reliable acquaintance, a twentieth-century manifestation of the decent viciousness. Because of Tonto, the Lone Ranger is engaged in a fistfight and this is a refusal of the subordination status which is given to him by the Lone Range, the representative of the popular culture. The characters of Alexei are involved in the same fistfight as Tonto. This is because his characters also struggle for their self-representation against the conquest narratives of the white dominant culture that define them as conquered folks (Cox, 1997: 55-56).

According to Native Americans identity consists of three main elements: firstly, the importance of rituals in the world of the Indians. The approach of Native American rituals is established on ecological wisdom, eco-friendly, spirituality and rituals of Indians. They have got some unchangeable environmental rules. They get permission from the spirit of the animal before they hunted it. Pow-wow is a very spiritual annual gathering of Native Americans. The significance of women in Native American society is regarded as the second and important element of Indian identity. In Indian society, women are regarded as the keeper of Native traditions. The third characteristic of Native American identity is the sacred perspective of nature and land. They have respect for nature. They do not kill deer even if they are hungry. The land is not evaluated with money. There were not any concepts of private land ownership, as the idea that it could be bought and sold was disgusting (Fejertiene, 2008: 4-5).

The main theme in Native American authors' writings is identity in the current time. Sherman Alexie is the leader of these writers who choose to write to retrieve native American identity. Alexie's characters in his writings seek for Native American identity peacefully. It is the outcome of the real society of Native American, alcoholism, homelessness, and poverty which are caused by the absence of identity. Alexie is unwillingly essentialist in the world of Native American politics of identity. The questions that he raises are all important, but the answers are not always consistent and uncompromising. Alexie declares that none of his children benefit from Native preference or the subsidies of education. They have attempted to cultivate a traditional

sense in their mind, about their identity and homeland. They have informed them of the stories of their people. Nevertheless, as mixed blood, they feel embarrassment pain due to the others' prejudices and ignorance. He gives an example about his sons and said that his second son looks like Americans, once he wore our bead choker, an Indian tradition necklace, to school, where his teacher mocked him, and his older son who looks like Indian, he has ever confronted violent and personal racist attacks.

However, Alexie's attitude of tribal awareness and essentialism uncovers historical racism. Hafen as a scholar declares that Alexie's writings give him a big hope since Alexie's writings will make the critics understand that Native American Literature not only training in the literary theories. Due to the fact that Alexie's writing is a real sample from Native Americans in real life. In his writings, Alexie tries to revive their history for the sake of their identity and to show the reality of contemporary Native Americans. He makes a link between the past and the present (Hafen, 1997: 77-78). Furthermore, this is quite clear in *What you pawn What you Pawn I Will* Yorker in 2003. Then, it was included in *Ten Little Indians* (2004) a collection of nine short stories by Alexie. The protagonist of the story, Jackson Jackson observes his grandmother's powwow regalia in the window of the pawn shop, which he saw before in a photograph. Moreover, Jackson Jackson wants to repossess the stolen powwow regalia of his dead grandmother. Alexie uses regalia as a symbol of Native American identity. Despite his hunger, bankruptcy, and homelessness, he insists on his quest. It shows that identity is more important than money, food, and home.

Through his story, Alexie takes responsibility for reviving the Indian Americans all properties especially Native American identity. The story gives evidence of Sherman Alexie's responsibility. As Jackson thinks it is his duty to repossess his grandmother's powwow regalia, it is impossible. Jackson stands for all the isolated Native Americans who lost their land, culture, and identity. Through the story, Alexie wants to tell all the humanity that Native American identity was stolen in the past and the new generation will regain it. At the same time, he has a message to Native American society. They have to get benefit from the modern world to retrieve

their tradition and culture which their identity belongs to, not to lose their tradition. He urges them to ask about their origin "Do any of us know exactly what we are?" (qtd. In Shalabi, 2013:3). He searches for the Native American identity and reminds Indians that they are responsible for their tradition and culture even in the present time. The responsibility of the Native American identity is obvious in the story as Jackson, the protagonist, reminds the reader of Native American traditions.

### **2.3 Modern Native American Identity**

Sherman Alexie is considered to be as a non-traditional Native American writer and at the same time, he is calling himself so because he makes use of his own experiences to write creatively and honestly about the modern issues and subjects in his real life. He wants to play a role in painting a new identity for Native Americans in this modern world. Hence the major topics in his writings are those key aspects such as alcoholism, stereotypes, and self-worth. Sherman Alexie in his past two periods has accurately painted a modern Native American identity. This identity reflects the struggles and sufferings that inflict a great majority of Native Americans in the United States today.

#### **2.3.1 Stereotypic Portrayal of Native Americans**

A stereotype is an immovable and frequently oversimplified specification of a specific class or group of people. For example, Native Americans have been stereotyped as alcoholics over the centuries. However, this stereotype has dominated them in several ways, but indigenous Americans have made little effort to prevent this stereotype from ongoing. Ethnic writers frequently use typical stereotypes and ethnic identifiers to comment on racism, racial prejudices, or an ethnic community problem. Alexie is one of these ethnic authors who write about native Americans in a stereotypical point of view. Ethnic authors can help to transform these negative depictions into positive changes in their communities by owning and deploying the stereotypes that target them. Extraordinary characters breaking out of the stereotype

help to change the understanding of their communities which is based on stereotypes (Bryan, 2015: 3).

According to the reports by The American Psychiatric Association (APA) that jointly worked with the National Centre for Health Statistics alcoholism is the main reason behind the top four deaths in Native Americans which are accidents, domestic violence, and child abuse and physical deterioration. There are many connections between Alcoholism and Alexie, both in his literature and his own personal life. Both his parents were alcoholics, and he himself has addicted to alcoholics for six years which led to many sad and sobering moments in his life just as we can see in his young adult literature novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. Junior, the young character, loses a sister to a terrible fire due to careless drinking. Alexie writes this as a fact as early as his childhood; alcohol claimed the life of his older sister in the same fashion.

There is a continuous struggle between the new Native American identity and the old values in a modern world, filled with alcoholism and poverty. These issues, are still an epidemic for Native Americans in general and for Alexie in particular. This new identity of Alexie's characters is inflicted with alcoholism and poverty. This is not just based on observations but on real hard data of studies and statistics, which proves that alcoholism is a part of the Native American identity indeed. The impact of alcoholism can be seen obviously in Alexie's novels, poems, and essays. All the characters, in some way or another, are related to alcoholism and poverty from *Reservation Blues* and *Smoke Signals* to his alcoholic love poems and even this subject is dealt with in a personal way in his autobiographic novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Using his own experiences, Alexie has given his characters real problems that face Native Americans every day.

Alcoholism and poverty are the main problems that are forever attached to Native Americans and it has become a distinctive feature of the Native American identity. Alexie's major topics of his writings are alcoholism and poverty and both of them have been used by placing his characters in situations where they witness deaths and downfalls of their own people and must decide their own path. Alexie, also, has

dealt with the pain of losing family members and friends due to alcoholism and suffering through poverty. He is very much against those who deny this being a problem or the source of suffering for the Native Americans. Alexie is often criticized because he portrays the unchanging stereotypes of Native Americans and how Indians are seen as lazy and drunk.

Gloria Bird is one of these critics who wrote her article titled "*The Exaggeration of Despair in Sherman Alexie's Reservation Blues*" to label him as such. In her article Bird focused on the abuses of alcoholism and its effects as portrayed in *Reservation Blues*. Bird accuses Alexie several times of stereotyping and sensationalizing alcoholism in Native Americans by invoking the images of the "drunken Indian". Bird recognizes the problem of alcoholism in Native Americans and thinks that the subject is a difficult one to deal with and write properly about. (Bird, 1997: 6)

Official data has regularly shown that indeed alcoholism is the number one killer among Native Americans. In a hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs in the United States Senate on the *Problems Facing Native American Youths* many of those who appeared focused on the subject of alcoholism. One of those who testified was J.R. Cook, Executive Director of UNITY, United National Indian Tribal Youth Council. Mr. Cook reported that a survey by the council showed that their prioritized worries and issues focused on alcohol and substance abuse followed by poverty. These results showed that even teens involved in these youth councils understand that alcoholism is a simple issue in their lives. The hearing also obtained testimony from John P. Walters, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and Vincent M. Biggs, M.D., from the American Academy of Paediatrics. Both testimonies touched on the issues of alcoholism and the widespread consequences it has on those involved. Both men pointed out that this issue is a clear warning of the future if more effective programs are not introduced and implemented soon. The problem now is so rampant that the APA reports that alcohol abuse in young people of 15-24 years of age has seen a massive increase with the death rate of 5.5 in 100,000. These statistics are increasing

since the 1980's when the Indian Health Service released findings based on similar studies of alcoholism in American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The Native American identity over the last two periods has drastically changed. No longer are Native Americans just stereotypes that are used in movies, jokes, cartoons, poorly researched novels and essays. Instead, the identity of the Native American has become more realistic, more accurate to what Sherman Alexie touches on in most of his novels, essays and poems. Alexie's characters fight with their beliefs and understandings of their people and rely on taking risks and learning from new experiences to get them through tough parts of their lives just as he had been growing up on the Spokane Indian reservation.

Modern times have shown that Native Americans are losing their connections with their past and are being forced into a modern world at a blistering pace and for many, alcohol has been a way to escape the poverty and ghosts of the past. Alexie's writing about alcoholism although is considered by some as sensationalized and overreaching, cannot be denied of its validity. So indeed, alcoholism is a part of the modern Native American identity and for many it is a struggle and which ultimately will lead to their downfall, bringing an end to their life just like characters in some Alexie's work. Of course, alcoholism is not a new style for Native Americans and has been well established in the past. (Ortiz, 2010: 3-6)

A drunk Native American lying on the floor, an Indian crying for litter, drinking bottles are thrown everywhere, a statue made of wood in a cigarette store, these are considered as Native American stereotypes that were iconic parts of Native American history. The Native American Indian identity of the past was based on people's naive assumptions. Native Americans' lives in the past were filled with images of mysterious people singing and dancing around fires or riding on horseback to kill innocent people, who are regarded as inhuman, horrible and non - human. To Native Americans, these stereotypes are hurtful and abusive. (Ortiz, 2010: 7).

Authors often use stereotypes in their writings as a device in literature to disapprove those who employ in their works. These stereotypes which the authors

focused on are often associated with problems in their communities. Although some authors take stereotypes seriously, others prefer to use humour to deal with them. The authors try to bring the reader's attention to serious issues while amusing their audience by using humour. For example, Sherman Alexie uses humour in his works to emphasize on painful realities in Native American society. He demonstrates how these realities are frequently stated as exaggerated stereotypes and he succeeds not only in raising awareness of these problems but also in rebutting the associated stereotypes while using them in multiple genres.

Alexie grew up in Spokane reservation surrounded by alcoholism and poverty. He overpowered all the conditions in which he was born and ultimately decided to leave the reservation in order to be a successful comedian and writer. He earned many valuable things in his life with having many aspects. Besides, he is not only a producer, screenwriter, songwriter, professor but also a husband and father. His works are overloaded with Native Americans history, colonization, tradition, culture, and so many issues in his community (Bryan, 2015: 2). As Lynn Cline argued about Alexie in *Ploughshares*, a literary journal "his work carries the weight of five centuries of colonization, retelling the American Indian struggle to survive, painting a clear, compelling, and often painful portrait of modern Indian life." (Cline, 2000: 197). For more than two decades during his career as a writer, his works have been the topic of many Native and non-Native scholars and critiques. Many times, because of his portrayals of Native Americans and their life on reservations, Alexie's writings have been on the prohibited book list.

Alexie himself was addicted to alcohol as a result of growing up in an alcoholic environment. While he was drinking alcohol, he wrote his first two books. However, he withdraws himself from the alcoholic habit and is sober at the present time. Soon he realizes the influence of the alcoholic conditions. His works emphasize alcoholism amongst many other issues which are affecting all Native American populations in modern time. Most of Alexie's stories characters are based on his experiences during his stay on the reservation. With the help of his humorous characters, Alexie could heal the community Native Americans from the wrongdoings of past and present,

alteration of their sensitivities, and he encourages others to advance their lives by not permitting stereotypes to border their life and growth, and pull out stereotypes from the root (Bryan, 2015: 3).

However, Alexie's protagonists are ordinary, but in some way they are special. In all his works, Alexie stereotypically sends the characters in search of their identity, power and to show and change reservation life circumstances. The characters are always homeless, alcoholic, penniless, and storyteller. The main character, Thomas, has a special gift of telling stories. By the gift of Thomas, Alexie refers to the oral tradition of Native America. Thomas does not like his peers, he is not affected by the popular aspects of strong, and warrior-like as a real Indian. He is pretty sensitive and does not want to act like someone who is not real. His storytelling and romantic emotion, which he suffers from, make him an outsider. By telling his stories, he appears to trouble others, even if he tries to help them and change their reservation conditions. Alexie points out a slow disappearance of Indian traditions by the rejection of Thomas ' stories by others. Thomas then acts as their preservationist (Adámková, 2010: 39).

For his choices of writing about alcoholism and stereotype, Alexie is criticized by the critiques and authors such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Gloria Bird, and Louis Owen, but Alexie's works are still written to show that stereotypes about Indian American populations continuous. They claim that the continuous use of alcoholism in Alexie's writings is promoting the rotation of stereotyping toward Native American populations. Although a strong argument is existing to be made about this, there seems to be a less obvious problem.

Likewise, Alexie has prepared works for young adults. Alexie's most popular works in the last few years are *Flight* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. The only one might deliberately do that is Alexie, after picking the young adult audience, would reduce alcohol references, or leastwise have fewer alcoholic characters, but Alexie does not change. In contrast, like the others, these young adult works are filled with abusive and alcoholic characters like fathers and teenagers, who are addicted to alcohol as often as their ancestors. These kinds of characters are also



not appreciated for their choices of lifestyle, and the young protagonists, who decide to give up drinking alcohol and build a new life far from inebriation, they live happily forever, but Alexie eventually promotes a false reality that most Native Americans are alcoholics especially the adults, regardless of these works' eventual feel-good nature.

At the same time, Alexie's message for young adults is considered as a problematic message because of some reasons, and the major problem is that many of the young readers are non-Native Americans and simultaneously these adults have not got enough information about Native American culture. Since so minimal Native American culture is instructed in schools, other than the frequently romanticized story of the primary Thanksgiving, youthful grown-ups are just ready to shape sentiments and accumulate learning from sources like these works. When such works debate the issue of alcoholism in such a way, many young adults much more likely start to have faith that the whole Native American populations are alcoholics, which in turn will keep doing the cycle of Native Americans' stereotyping. Furthermore, these writings are regarded as problematic for the Native American young audience. Although one would accept that this audience would understand indigenous cultures better, Alexie does not stop the young indigenous audience from trusting that alcoholism is accepted and normal in Native American culture.

As such, this kind of writing is problematic for two main reasons. First, for indigenous young people who in their families are also fenced by alcohol, the works of Alexie do nothing but emphasize the normality of the condition. Second, although his works for young adults have "happy" endings, they do not propose a solution to how alcoholism can be removed from the lives of those around them. Like other family members, the parents remain drinking alcohol. At the same time Alexie gives a kind of indirect solution, his characters who are addicted to alcohol heavily in the reservation, decide to leave the reservation and intermingle with American mainstream and they give up drinking, but they are alienated from their culture and family. That is why, Alexie attempts to attract the attention of Native Americans to their Native tradition, culture, and identity above all. Alexie's works for young adults are not appropriate for their intended audience, Native American or else, primarily because

they continue the cycle of stereotyping Native American populations, especially pertaining to alcoholism (Kern, 2011: 2-3).

#### **2.4 Sherman Alexie's Social Realism**

Social Realism is also known as naturalistic realism which concentrates on social problems and the hardships of human's everyday life. Social realism is pertaining to the civilized urban American view of miserable artists. These artists were affected by the Ashcan school, a group of American artists who mostly highlighted a realistic view of the city life in their painting, of the early 20th century.

Alexie, as a Native American version of social realism, is famous for his clear description of the unpleasant social realities of life in reservations. He is unconventional, but rather a postmodern voice of the perpetual search for Native American cultural identity and social reality. His writings are the reflection of the Native American community. Alexie's poetry, short stories, and novels have been evaluated by scholars, reviewers, and critics for the realistic representations of the Indian American involvements in confrontation to the modern American mainstream. In his works, Alexie portrays a realistic picture of Indians in the reservation and off the Reservation. Sherman Alexie's writings show dark humour, the crippling impact of alcoholism, housing reservation, dysfunctional existence, the struggle of race, and poverty which penetrates the individual's daily life on the reservation, the anger which appears from the deformation and extinction of the Native American true identity.

In general, he focuses on three major issues in the Native American community: alcoholism, self-representation, and stereotypes. They can be counted as the modern culture of Native Americans. He depicts the urban Native Americans who are mixed with white immigrants and lost their culture. To Alexie, culture is a significant part of identity. Beside the Indian identity, they forget their cultural identity. Many urban Indians are mix-blooded. Instead of searching for their identity, Native Americans are addicted to alcohol severely. He portrays the modern culture and identity of Native Americans. The reader can easily be attentive to Alexie's techniques: for example, turnabout stereotypes that are seen in his works. Besides, humour is seen

as superficial. He criticizes the dominant culture with the stereotypes attached to the Indians.

Alexie's writings display dark humour, the devastating impact of alcoholism, lack of health care, unemployment, suicide, poverty, housing reservation, and racial struggle, that permeate Indians life on the reservation in addition to the anger which arises from the obliteration and misrepresentation of a factual identity of Native Americans. Alexie is identified as an inventive realist and scholarly contributor to Native American modern tradition. Irony and satire are kinds of humour conveyed through conversation. It shows Alexie's anger at the victims of the colony which still exists in modern American society. Talented blips, remarks, and epigrams are Alexie's weapons in the literary warfare to battle the multicultural society which torments the indigenous people. Additionally, according to Alexie being a traditional writer and dreaming the past is useless. The twenty-first century Native Americans still suffer from injustice and race trauma in modern American society. As a real Indian, he appropriates his writings with modern problems in the modern age. He writes for nowadays Native Americans. Undoubtedly, to show the miseries, suffering, inequality, and immorality, is horrible and may not be endured by the reader. So, Alexie handles the modern technique of humour. He uses humour as a green card for two reasons: to make the reader laugh even on the negative things, and to criticize the USA government for neglecting Indians and Native Americans themselves as well.

In this vein, social realism and humour overlap each other. Undoubtedly, in realistic issues, humour existed and behind all the humours a believable realism is found. As it can be seen in Alexie's style and techniques in writings, he handles a positive way to explore a negative side of life.

### **2.5 Humour in Sherman Alexie's Works**

Humour is a very distinctive feature in Native American contemporary writings. Humour can be distinguished as the Native American seriousness, naturalness and the capacity to state and feel the reality of things in their life. Humour is occasionally the best weapon of defense for the indigenous literary characters. In

addition, it is a helpful way to handle the issues of injustice, racism, and discrimination that they confronted. So, humour is a rather popular style which the contemporary Native American writers take into consideration in their works. Currently, Sherman Alexie is the best humourist in Indian American literature.

What characterizes Sherman Alexie most is his particular type of humour that pervades his work with irony and sarcasm. His occasional performance of a stand - up comedy is the proof that he is really talented. Humour and his way of telling stories together make Alexie's works well read by the readers as a result of his way of humour and storytelling altogether.

According to Alexie humour is the powerful and positive force in the world. Humour is the only way that makes humans to laugh in sad situations. For Alexie laughing is the symbol of health. Healthy people are laughing but if they do not laugh it means they are in a special health problem. In an interview with *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art* Alexie reveals his attitude about humour:

It's not desperate. That's one of the real cultural gaps - Indians are funny. It's just funny. Humor is the most powerful force in the world. It's a positive force. Being able to laugh at sad things is a sign of health. If somebody is not laughing, that's when they're in trouble. (Alexie, 1996: 188)

Alexie refuses to write about sacred things as he affirmed: "I don't write about the sacred," (Alexie, 1996: 187) since he designates more expected how Indians live in the modern world. Accordingly, in his works, humour is identically essential, because he habitually writes about things that are not funny. He has a rather special penchant to describe negative things in his writings in the ridiculous and occasionally darkest detail. This is perhaps perceptible in Alexie's *Indian Killer*, the thriller is hateful, violent and angry that he wrote so that to demonstrate another powerful novel with the respect to humour (Trtílková, 2013: 13-20).

Humour is Alexie's green card in his writings, as he responded in an interview with Nelson, "Humour is my green card" (Nelson, 2010: 7) The most fundamental characteristic of Alexie is humour. In the face of awful conditions humour is the only

weapon for Alexie in both first and second collections of short stories *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993) and *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000). The combination of both the trenchant irony and laughter often produces the use of humour or dark humour, which are directed to illogical predication upon such problems as alcoholism, unemployment, drug abuse, poverty, the uncertain future, diabetes, and windswept cultural traditions, in Alexie's works.

Alexie uses such techniques as satire, parody, mockery, farce, and exaggeration, in order to form dark humour and irony. In addition, this is an impressive strategy to demonstrate historical trauma and present circumstances of discrimination which is shaped by white hegemony and carry struggles produced by assimilation. Such edgy, disruptive, even liberating humour also promotes self-actualization and social action, providing a means of survival amid often-bewildering and absurd conditions (Jeff Berglund, 2010: 25). In addition to this kind of tragicomic laughter, Alexie discloses the dominant culture's empty promises and untruthful ideologies by way of beginning a conversation with readers on problematic issues and stereotypes.

The tragicomic technique was used by American dark humourists from 1950s to 1970s. They used this technique as an answer to a supposed, confusing state of absurdity shaped by worlds of post-atomic, postmodern, and post-Holocaust. The novelist-satirist has to find a way of his own to convey the message. So, Alexie finds dark humour to uncover the illogicality of cultural discrimination, the community fragmentation, and a loss of rituals and myths. Additionally, the novelist uses the tragic-comedy in times of crisis, by the same way Alexie's writing develops cultural awareness by successfully criticizing dominant principles. Alexie receives the complete benefit of the irony, the humorous absurdities, and the doublespeak production of dark humour. In destabilizing his topic, Alexie produces a conversation outside the dominant dissertation to show the actual difficulties opposite Native Americans on and off the reservation (Jeff Berglund, 2010: 25-26).

Philip Heldrich exposes that Sherman Alexie's purpose in using humour is for the sake of survival. As he equates Alexie's humour throughout his chapter as "Survival = Anger x Imagination." Besides, he applies this equation on both Alexie's

works *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, and *The Toughest Indian in the World*, and he reveals how dark humour, in these two works, has taken into consideration “present conditions of inequality created by white hegemony while conveying conflicts generated by assimilation” (Jeff Berglund, 2010: 25). Even though it is right that dark humour is used by most of Alexie’s characters in order to survive with a damaged culture and outdo voids. It carries a question whether humour can be accounted for the darkest truths which Alexie depicts for specific characters in both novels *Flight* and or not. For example, death is regarded as the most humorous tool in Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indians*. It is when Junior, the protagonist, at the funeral of his grandmother, said “All of us laughed when they lowered my grandmother into the ground. All of us laughed when they covered her with dirt” (Alexie, 2007: 167).

The blasphemed myths, taboos, theologies, philosophies, and ideologies are the dominant culture for Alexie’s dark humour which reflects the general strategies used by black humourists. Though, he is also critical of his own community, especially those people who have adopted or fallen victim to the stereotypes posed by these ideologies. However, his comedy purposefully undermines the stereotypes he depicts to examine their origin and draw attention to the problems they create. So, we can say he continually draws attention to the relationships between centre and margin, inside and outside, white and red. Furthermore, humour has always been a central part of Alexie’s work especially from his poetry to fiction. For instance, Jennifer Gillan notes that the tragicomic aspect of poems in "Old Shirts and New Skins" and the way this humour plays a role in both the songs and bands stories in *Reservation Blues*.

In order to further prove that Alexie uses humour for Native Americans survival in his works Lincoln states, “As expressed by survivors of tragedy, nonvanishing Native Americans, this humour transcends the void, questions of fatalism, and outlasts suffering...At cultural ground zero, it means that Indians are still here, laughing to survive” (Lincoln, 1993: 45-46). More specifically, in Alexie's *Lone Ranger*, dark humour addresses difficult issues faced by those living on the Spokane Reservation, problems often created by conflicting ideologies generated from the

opposition between the reservation and the dominant culture. In *Toughest Indian*, on the other hand, Alexie's tragicomedy moves off the reservation to explore the contradictions generated by cultural exchange or presumptions related to assimilation. Furthermore, *Flight* is the best example for Lincoln's declaration that humour and laugh are both for surviving and it can be applied to the novel in the ninth chapter when Zits, the protagonist of the *Flight*, in the middle of a combat, contrary to his army and Custer, is transferred to a camp. He states, "It's all gunfire and screams and Indian singing and silence and more silence and then the sounds of celebration. I swear I hear laughter" (Alexie, 2013: 113).

## **2.6 The Image of the Trickster in Sherman Alexie's Works**

The trickster is one of the most important characteristics and the common theme of Native American literature. As Lincoln argues about trickster: "the Trickster is pan-Indian, and some forms of libidinous humour surface in many tribal creation myths." (Lincoln, 1993: 22). The trickster is observed commonly as a model among Native American tribes and their figures are significant in folk tales. These trickster figures are normally God-like and of animals with human qualities. Animals are recognized for their capability to discover new lands and fit in urban and wild environments such as coyote, dragon fly, racoon raven, and spider are chosen as trickster figures in the oral tradition of Native America. The trickster, Coyote, plays a remarkable role in literature, particularly in the novel. The trickster is a naughty, a deceitful or a false character in folklore or myth that naturally compensates "for physical weakness with cunning and subversive humour." (Miller, 2009: 105). The Trickster changes between gentleness and unkindness, stupidity and cleverness, deceived and deceiver, culture creator and breaker of prohibitions. It is a cultural hero of native myths and likewise the common character of postmodern narrative with multi-ethnic origins. The trickster figure could be a foolish character who shows human greed. Frequently the medium – spirited or the selfish actions of the trickster figure result in punishment. Even though the trickster character can hurt or act

incorrectly against the others, it is still observed in tribal stories as a cultural hero (Rana, 2018: 1-2). Next to the influence of stereotype, trickster is considered as the second influence on the protagonists depicted in novels. That figure changes according to the tradition of the writer's tribe in Native American literature. Sherman Alexie is one the Native American writers, from the Spokane reservation in Washington, who frequently uses the trickster in his works (Attardo, 2014: 27).

Getting the pretended by the trickster in oral custom who shows a thing or two, Alexie uses humour as a strategy to approach/bring into light the troublesome issues lingering in the general public liquor abuse and neediness. Through his accumulation of stories, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, Alexie himself assumes the job of a swindler for the general public, as he challenges on the language shows and generalizations, through exhibiting a cheat figure in his works. He delineates the historical backdrop of sadness, hardship and racial separation of being Native American-from a Reservation and how one attempts to keep up once inborn character to make due in White society. Thomas Builds - the – Fire is one of the trickster figures in this story gathering that is spoken to likewise to coyote. The trickster is viewed as one of the most established fanciful figures in the Native American oral convention. Thomas Build-the-fire is the man who obliges to the network needs and goes about as an instructing help that adds to the advantage of couture to endure.

Thomas Build-the – Fire is available in the three stories "A Drug Called Tradition," 2013: 58), "This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona" (2013: 126), and "The Trail of Thomas Builds-The-Fire" (2013: 175). Thomas, who is appeared without friendship and furthermore sub-par compared to others in physical quality however is indestructible like a coyote. As he is the one in particular who endure when his home sets ablaze and his folks kicked the bucket. He even faces the embarrassment and beatings from his counterparts, and the dismissal he languishes over being an Indian at whatever point he leaves the booking. A swindler is known for showing exercises significantly through stories, correspondingly Thomas Build – the – Fire portrays the accounts that defies with Euro-American form of at various times. Thomas



Build-the-Fire acquires the narrating capacity, as his granddad, Samuel Builds-the-Fire is presented with the ability to portray the story suddenly (Rana, 2018: p. 3).



## CHAPTER III

### TRADITION VERSUS MODERNITY IN SHERMAN ALEXIE'S *RESERVATION BLUES AND THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN*

#### **3.1 *Reservation Blues* and the Tragic History of American Indians Torn between Tradition and Modernity**

*Reservation Blues* is Sherman Alexie's bestselling and first novel. *Reservation Blues* was first published by The Atlantic Monthly Press in 1995 and was reprinted in 1996 by Warner Brothers Press, and finally by Grove/Atlantic in 2005. Although, it is Alexie's first step to write a novel, it is a prize-winning novel. In addition to winning several awards including the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation in 1996 and the Murray Morgan Prize, *Reservation Blues* was also published in Asia and Europe. This novel is the most controversial novel which is loaded with Native American, traumatic history, traditions, religion, as well as their endurance in modern American society. Through the characters' dreams, it combines past and present traumatic events which faced Native Americans.

Alexie's *Reservation Blues* is the story of a group of three young Spokane Indians: Thomas Builds-the-Fire, Junior Polatkin and Victor Joseph, who live in the Spokane Indian reservation. The novel starts with a stranger Robert Johnson who arrived on the reservation. He is an African American legendary bluesman with a magic guitar reaching the crossroads of a Spokane reservation. None of Indians greets this stranger unless Thomas. Finally, when he leaves the reservation blues, he climbs up to the hill in order to see Big Mom for healing. He leaves his guitar behind himself in Thomas's blue van. Thomas is impressed by the satanic magic of Robert Johnson's guitar, which is considered to have some mystical power, and could change Thomas's life. As a consequence, he decides to establish a blues musical band, named "Coyote Springs". Thomas plays bass guitar, Junior plays the drums, and Victor plays Johnson's magic guitar. This band is guided by Thomas Builds-the-fire who is the reservation outcast and storyteller. The whole story of *Reservation Blues* brightens with lyricism

and black humour, and its roots are in the mythology and storytelling traditions of Native American (Cline, 2001: 201).

*Reservation Blues* is considered as an exploration of native Americans life and culture on the Spokane reservation and Native Americans society in the modern wave in general. In addition, it is regarded as the examination of oral and musical traditions. Musical instruments play a significant role in this novel. The novel starts with a magical guitar of a Black American, Robert Johnson. Furthermore, each new part of the novel starts with a lyric. Alexie has recorded a soundtrack, with the help of Jim Boyd, his collaborator and long-time friend, which includes Jim Boyd's music based on Alexie's songs and readings in the novel. Additionally, one of the songs from the soundtracks is "Small World," that was presented at the Honour the Earth Campaign Benefit Concert also it was included in the album Benefit for the Honour the Earth Campaign in 1996.

Alexie's first novel acclaimed by the critics, asserting that Alexie had organized his position as one of America's most talented contemporary writers. The protagonist of the novel, Thomas-Builds-the-Fire, is a big storyteller. The novel shows Thomas as a Native American young musician on the Spokane Reservation. He is given a guitar from Robert Johnson the eternally damned and mysterious Black individual. After Thomas-Builds-the-Fire encounters Robert Johnson, his mythical dance begins with the devil (Jones, 2010: 7).

In *Reservation Blues*, Sherman Alexie narrates the story of a blues band of Native American Indian, that depends on a career promise, to record their songs and music, but ultimately the band fails to get a record agreement in contrast to their previous non-Indian and White women Veronica and Betty clothed as Indians. Chess Warm Water is a member of the authentic Native American Indian woman of the band, emotionally states towards the eagerness of young women Americans for the adoption of Indians identity "You aren't really an Indian unless there was some point in your life that you didn't want to be." (Alexie, 1995: 98). Non - Indians who are captivated by indigenous culture could play their music more commercially and effectively than the Indians themselves, but they will continuously keep on in the kingdom of the

simulacrum and never take part in the community of those affected by the traumatic life on reservation. The principle of actual Indianness by Chess Warm Water raises the question of which type of bonding with and through music is conceivable in a cultural assumption situation such as that designated in Alexie's novel. If Indians can never be "real" Indians hopefully, so what else are they going to become? Waligorska thinks that "if we deny the possibility of "authentic" identification via ethnic music to those who do not belong to the ethnic group that "owns" the music, does it mean that their engagement in the culture of the other bears no significance whatsoever for their identity?" (Waligorska, 2013: 201).

### **3.1.1 A Novel of Colourism**

In *Reservation Blues*, Alexie not only focuses on Indians, red skins, but also clarifies on African Americans, Blackness. As it is argued by Brian "white or ethnic minority writers who turn to Jim Crow and his black subjects? And in the process, what happens when we find Jim Crow's citizens far from their expected location in the segregated South?" (Norman, 2010: 108). Besides, he clarifies that Alexie's *Reservation Blues* is the best example which drops Robert Johnson, who is a blues guitarist, into a nowadays reservation of Spokane Indian. What this famous Black American, artist from the Jim Crow South is doing, in the centre of a contemporary Native American Indian reservation in the West?

Alexie's novel involves the attempt of a group of young Native American Indians, who are trying to harmonize traditional methods of knowing which is expressed in Big Mom's character, with modern culture of American mainstream, in which they provoke their wish to rock and roll music. The tale comes full circle in a flopped New York City record bargain and the gathering's arrival to "the rez"; in the meantime, Robert Johnson stays on the booking in discussion with Big Mom, who is supposed to have shown famous music legends, for example, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix.

Robert Johnson appears as a playful and noticeable one to connect contemporary American Indians with their cultural heritage. As it can be seen, it is

found in Alexie's works well. Alexie famously tries to take an opportunity to approach to all American history and popular culture as he employs a range of references, from Coyote and Custer to The Brady Bunch, often in the same passage. In addition, African American culture under Jim Crow especially in *Reservation Blues* carries particular significance of historical background of the book. So black history as a tribal council sanction becomes a part of American Indian history.

The storyteller protagonist Thomas Builds – the Fire, inherits Johnson's guitar and by extension, his legendary deal with the devil. So, Alexie develops a reservation blues novel, a song of American Indian economic deprivation, ethnic colonization, and cultural renewal. Alexie's inventive multicultural project is buttressed by an imported master narrative of Jim Crow segregation and the perceived authenticity of its associated black cultural traditions. "This isn't my guitar," Thomas said. "But I'm going to change the world with it" (Alexie, 1995: 13). The importance of Johnson's instrument takes great role by Thomas and becomes clear to him and his band because "Y'all need to play songs for your people. They need you" (Alexie, 1995: 23). More than a cross ethnic borrowing, Alexie uses Johnson's blues model and its emergence from Jim Crow segregation to navigate the American Indian reservation system and the attendant desire to sing a beautiful song from that location.

Jim Crow tropes and figures pop up interestedly and persistently in key white and racial American literary projects. So too, specific segregation narratives inform contemporary multi-ethnic American fiction well beyond Alexie's novel, most notably with Chang-Rae Lee's novel *Native Speaker* (1995), an Asian American adaptation of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Richard Wright's *Native Son*. But Lee's direct revision of African American segregation narratives is more an exception than a rule when it comes to multi-ethnic neo-segregation narratives. Instead, like Alexie's use of Robert Johnson, the historiographic mode yields to a more speculative mode as writers attempt to forge genealogical bonds and partnerships that may have been rather unimaginable in the historical context of compulsory race segregation (Norman, 2010: 108).

The two characters Victor and Thomas in *Reservation Blues* appear in the previous three collections of short stories by Alexie. He repeatedly uses these two Indian characters in his works. Joseph L. Coulombe's explanation on the connection between Victor and Thomas can be applied to all texts which contains these two characters. Victor and Thomas are not just opposed to Indian stereotypes versions. Indeed, their relationship is reciprocally edifying their exchanges depiction the limitations of their viewing of the world. For example, Coulombe asserts: "Recognizing his separation from his ancestors, [Victor] ultimately accepts (albeit uneasily) the importance of their traditions, particularly that of story-telling. He acknowledges the value of Thomas's vision of sobriety and traditionalism . . ." (Harold Bloom, 2010: 96).

*Reservation Blues* clearly mirrors Alexie's American Studies training and the reflection of Native American traumatic history. The novel starts with a historical event, it demonstrates the displacement of Native Americans and their transmission to the Indian reservation and the creation of Spokane reservation in 1881 "In the one hundred and eleven years since the creation of the Spokane Indian Reservation in 1881, not one person, Indian or otherwise, had ever arrived there by accident." (Alexie, 1995: 3). It shows that this novel can be seen in an historical perspective and at the same time the coming Indian generation can get their ancestral history through it.

In fact, the novel recalls and reminds the reader about African Americans' tragic history. As it can be seen in a very beginning of the novel the black stranger Robert Johnson who is a singer and mythical blues guitarist. He comes to the Indian reservation in order to heal and be treated from his illnesses. As it is told in the story, Robert Johnson sold his soul to the (Gentleman) devil who, in exchange for his soul, made Johnson a better musician. But he does not dare to play the guitar lest the Gentleman hears it and find Johnson. He left the guitar behind himself and kept on going towards Big Mom. She is a healer of Indian tribes living on a distant part far from the reservation on the top of the hill. After that, Thomas carries the guitar and thinks of a band with Victor and Junior. Victor carries the guitar, which is a guitar that

cannot be destroyed easily. Indeed, Victor does not have a real talent to play the guitar, but the talent is inherited by this magic guitar (Lundquist, 2004: 158).

### **3.1.2 Dominant Western Values Versus Native American Values in a Postmodern Style**

The novel clarifies that even the 'victim' can retain limited influence in an apparently fossilized power structure between resistance, parody, and adaptation. The novel negotiates on a permanent basis between traditional Native American values and dominant Western values and points of reference. It makes Native American realities clear how culture is a dynamic concept, how it is possible to achieve a tentative balance between cultural change and preservation, and in a process of transculturation minorities how can prevail. On their approach to progress and acclaim the gathering procures a couple of vocalists in Chess and Checkers, two Flathead ladies, and two groupies, Indian "wanna-be's," Betty and Veronica, named after characters in the Archie comic arrangement. At the point when Betty sees that white individuals need to resemble Indians so they can live content with the earth and be astute, Chess says, "You've never put in a couple of hours in the Powwow Tavern. I'll demonstrate you astute and serene." The devastation of the fantasy comes when the gathering goes to New York, where they find that their exploitative specialists are none other than Phil Sheridan (wellspring of the words "The main great Indian is a dead Indian") and George Wright (who instructed the troopers that butchered the Spokane horses in 1858, a common theme in Alexie's work). They work for Calvary Records. This tale includes expansive funniness, yet the chuckling is quite often difficult and painful.

Alexie confirms an equation in his novel that he shaped through "Imagining the Reservation," (1998: 94) from *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*: "Survival = Anger + Imagination. Imagination is the only weapon on the reservation." (Carrillo, 1998: 94) Furthermore, bad memories and character's nightmares haunt the novel. The characters including Thomas Builds-the-Fire, Victor, and, Junior Polatkin who are recognizable from Alexie's other poems and stories. Big Mom, who owns the authoritative magic and lives on a mountain on the reservation, plays the role of the

deity in the novel. The story begins when a historic character Robert Johnson, a Mississippi black blues guitarist, who sold his soul to a white man known as (The Gentleman) or the devil. He wanders into the reservation for healing his illness and his literally magic guitar is transferred to Victor (Peck, 1997: 1).

Sherman Alexie is one the writers from second wave or post 1990 (Sim, 2011: 169-170). Hence there, Sherman Alexie grew up and spent most of his life in postmodern times due to the fact that he was born in 1966, and his novel *Reservation Blues* is regarded as the postmodern version of Alexie's works and is published in 1995. In an essay *Exaggeration of Despair in Sherman Alexie's "Reservation Blues"* Gloria Bird regards Alexie's *Reservation Blues* as a "cosmopolitan or postmodern" (Alexie, 1995: 48) novel.

Furthermore, many aspects of postmodern features are used in *Reservation Blues*. For example, paradox, black humour, and wit are used in the novel and these techniques are suggested by subversion which is one of the features of postmodern literature. At the beginning of the novel reality and fiction are used. It is another feature blending the real historical and fictional events. As it can be seen at the beginning of the book when Alexie starts with one of the historical treaties of Native Americans of the creation of reservation in 1881, at the same time he mixes it with the fictional story of the Robert Johnson. He uses definitely common and non - exceptional characters and events which are considered the feature of minimalism.

One of the most obvious characteristics of postmodern literature is magic realism, the blending of magic with realistic things and it is used in the novel commonly, as it can be seen when Alexie introduces Big Mom, a half-mythical character stays on the hill above the Spokane reservation. So, through historiographical metafiction, Alexie fictionalizes the character. Fragmentation is another feature of postmodern literature. The author divided the text into short fragments. By the same way, Alexie breaks up the novel into some sections. Each chapter is separated by the different and effective title and started with blues lyrics. Additionally, magic realism is touched in the novel through character's dreams and the flashbacks into the past, especially when they see their drunken parents, Cheek and Checkers remember their



brother's death and angry father when he was drunken, and Junior see his siblings in his dream (Adámková, 2010: 22-42).

### **3.1.3 The Technique of Doppelgangers in *Reservation Blues***

Undeniably, the novel consists of a sequence of Native American Indian characters shaded by the doubles of non-Indian character. This kind of extravagant doubles' system uncovers the complex similarities and differences that Alexie detects between the two cultures' values. As seen, in this novel Alexie uses Doppelgangers in a particularly successful way: the pairs help each other as foils, explaining and reflecting the characters in difference personalities in the novel. This literary doubling technique reveals connections amid characters where none of them is normally apparent. Doppelgangers of Alexie's novel propose the internal conflicts of his own and the explanations of similarities the oppositional Indian and non - Indian characters at first glance.

The best example for Alexie's use of Doppelgangers in *Reservation Blues* is the juxtaposition of both Indian and African characters, Thomas Builds-the-Fire and Robert Johnson. The name of the protagonist, Thomas, means "twin," and though Thomas and Robert are Indian and non-Indian, both of them are "twins": both of them are creators, with words - and – music; they are storytellers. They have inherited it and they have to tell their traditional stories. In spite of the involvement of both characters with the magic guitar, both can ultimately resist and struggle the guitar in the end. In addition, both of them deeply understand that music is for the healing sadness of people and it is the production of people's spirit, whether it is Negro slaves' mournful song or Indians' painful lamentation. Moreover, both of them realize that music should not be destroyed because music is considered as a sacred (Jorgensen, 1997: 19-20).

### 3.1.4 The Conflict Between Tradition and Modernity in *Reservation Blues*

*Reservation Blues* is the centre of recognizing authentic Native American traditions from Native American colonial traditions. The author tries to show the reader whether nowadays Native American reservations are really the location of Indian culture and traditions preservation or not. However, Native Americans consider reservation as a part of their tradition but Sherman Alexie refuses this idea at the very beginning of the novel *Reservation Blues*. He states that the Indian reservation is the product of American colonial power: "In the one hundred and eleven years since the creation of the Spokane Indian Reservation in 1881, not one person, Indian or otherwise, had ever arrived there by accident." (Alexie, 1995: 3). These words have occurred in the first sentence of the novel as an alarm to awaken all the humanity. Alexie wants to say that the non-Indian and Indian reader particularly that all Indian reservations do not belong to their authentic ancestral traditions and they are not their real ancestral homeland. It is an historical event and modern wave of Americans started to assimilate Native Americans traditions. They are deprived from their homeland which is the core of authentic culture and traditions.

The process of Indians displacement is one of the colonizer's policy in order to demolish the basic elements of the indigenous people and at the same time implant new European culture in Native American society. They were obliged to leave their land and adopt foreign culture. As Mark Stewart states in his book, *The Indian Removal Act: Forced Relocation*, " ... Native Americans required to leave their ancestral lands .... With the passage of the Indian Removal Act." (Stewart, 1960: 14). The main purpose behind this removal is to exchange the Native traditions with modern Euro-American societies. Fixico reveals it clearly as he states that the Native American people are "forced to become part of the larger colonized cultures of the mainstream...." (Philip J. Deloria, 2002: 384). So, it reveals to the reader that the Indians reservation is not the representative of Native Americans authentic tradition but the Indians were brainwashed to make them believe that the reservation is their traditional place. In this case the author tries to find another way to introduce and represent Native Americans ancestral traditions.

Alexie introduces the reservation as the place where everybody has been lost there. He uses the word lost when Robert Johnson arrived the Spokane Indian Reservation especially when Thomas told Johnson: " Are you lost?" (Alexie, 1995: 3) and Johnson replied " Been lost a while..." (Alexie, 1995: 4). As such, being on Indian Reservations means being lost. It reveals that Native Americans are lost in the reservation. Ancestral homeland and tradition are the identity of human being. When humans lose all these values, they lose their personality and identity as well. Through this word, lost, Sherman Alexie shows that Native Americans identity is lost. For Native Americans the modern place is the main cause of their lost identity. He exposes that the reservation changes all the authentic traditions and brings the indigenous people to the new disaster of American mainstream. That is why Alexie in many of his works makes the protagonist leave the reservation in order to search for their true identity.

Furthermore, the main themes of Sherman Alexie's novels are summarized thus: identity, mainstream culture, and disruption stay both dominating and interconnected. His situation on Indian character has changed: in reservation blues whites who negligently fitting Indian culture a strategy that Alexie considers a demonstration of colonization are chastised. One of the ways Alexie investigates the subject character by consolidating references to prevalent images and relics into his work is additionally a method for investigating the Indian's association with and dread of pop culture's perspective on local Americans. This investigation eventually interfaces with Alexie's program to subvert bigot and stereotyped pictures of Indians by portraying them as neither warriors nor soul world-chasing, saying gushing shamans yet rather as genuine individuals attempting to change in accordance with a world that sees their way of life as something either to proper or disregard (Sharp, 2006: 57).

The protagonist Thomas Builds-the-Fire is Sherman Alexie's performer of the Authentic Native Americans traditions. Even Alexie designs his protagonist's style the same as ancient Native Americans. As he describes him: "... tanned to a deep brown... With his long, black hair pulled into braids, he looked like an old-time salmon

fisherman... " (Alexie, 1995: 4). Not only in appearance but also, he looks like pre-Columbian Native Americans in his behaviour and traditions. When the Black stranger arrived the Spokane reservation all the Indians come to see him, although he waved at them all, but nobody replied him and they even did not dare to stop and greeting their guest.

One of the most prominent and authentic Native American traditions is hospitality. Before the arrival of European culture, they received the strangers warmly. Howard Zinn shows the hospitality tradition of Native Americans when Christopher Columbus and his followers landed first with swords and strange language: " .... the Arawaks run to greet them, brought them food, water, gifts." (Zinn, 2015: 1). So, it reveals that Native Americans warm reception to their visitors, but they were changed with the modern wave of White invaders.

Alexie uncovers that the reservation tradition does not belong to their ancestors because they do not greet the stranger, but Thomas here is the real representative of Native Americans ancestral hospitality tradition, as Alexie states: " Thomas Builds-the-Fire pulled up in his old blue van." After he reaches him, he greets him warmly and " He walked up to the black man and offered his hand..." (Alexie, 1995: 4) unlike the other Indians on the reservation. In spite of this, Alexie made the protagonist as a native American storyteller in the novel.

Storytelling is one of the undeniable Native Americans tradition. Besides, it is one of the significant genres of Native American oral tradition literature and it is the only tradition that is shared by the Indians because they owned different tradition from tribe to tribe. Storytellers had a special location in the ancient Native American civilization. They listened eagerly to the storyteller because they thought that storytelling keeps them healthier because the efforts of the storyteller were for common-well not for himself, as the significant role of storytellers is expressed by Karl Kroeber: "...they sustained the health of their community" (Kroeber, 2004: 5). Thomas tells the stories everywhere in any time it needs but the Indians refused to listen to him. They are even enraged by his stories. So, Alexie discloses the impact of modern culture of Europeans on the indigenous people. Nowadays, storytelling is

neglected by the Indians on the reservation, in which it is one of the most valuable traditions of their ancestors. Thomas, unlike the rest of Indians, touches his ancestral tradition of storytelling. An example of his telling stories is that when the Coyote Springs their band have to participate in a competition of the best rock band. After he closed his eyes, he started to tell his story:

Coyote Springs opens a show for Aerosmith at Madison Square Garden. We get up on the stage and start to play. At first, the crowd chants for Aerosmith, heckles us, but gradually we win them over. By the time our set is over, the crowd chanting our name. Coyote Springs. Coyote Springs. Coyote springs. They chant over and over. They keep chanting our name when Aerosmith comes out. They boo Aerosmith until we come back out. For the rest of our lives, all we can hear are our names, chanted over and over, until we are deaf to everything else. (Alexie, 1995: 211)

Via Thomas's storytelling role, Sherman Alexie wants to inform the reader that storytelling for Native Americans is a way to self-reliance. At the same, it is the source of power for every activity they want to do. In addition, storytelling is a way to remember their ancestral lifestyle and to serve the coming generation with their history and their authentic tradition. Tradition is power and if human being lost power and tradition it means that human being lost himself too. So, in this case identity will be lost. It is the horrible desperation as it can be seen through Sherman Alexie's characters behaviour.

By opening the subject of two White women, Betty and Veronica, in the novel Alexie explores the most dangerous risk upon Native American tradition and identity. They arrived reservation to play their guitar and sing their songs. They are considered as Europeans because of their long blonde hair and as Indian women in their too much Indian jewellery. It is Indian women tradition to wear their special and handcraft jewellery but not as much as Betty and Veronica wore. The occurrence of every new white face in reservation is a kind of losing a part of Native American tradition. Beside that these two white women attract the attention of Native American man, and they are

cursed by Indian Women and due to this Alexie demonstrates the risk of hybridity since it is one of the noticeable means of assimilation and loss of native traditions. This case is clearly shown by Alexie: "...naked white women who had visited the Spokane Indian Reservation rapidly grew in the boy's imagination..." (Alexie, 1995: 42).

Additionally, Alexie arises the idea of cultural exchange and cultural appropriation through the characters of Betty and Veronica. They used to sell Native American songs when the Coyote Springs band failed to win with the Cavalry Records. In addition, as a band looking for their fortune, Coyote Springs embraces the hope of becoming famous rock and roll band and obtain wealth which is part of the "American Dream". This also exposes itself to the capitalist forces of Cavalry Records in which it will be an attempt of destroying them and their authentic cultural history coldheartedly that they bring to their music. They are disappointed and they returned to their reservation but the Cavalry Record needs Native American songs for its popularity. At the same time, the white audiences like Native American music and songs. So, Cavalry Records asked Betty and Veronica to change themselves according to Native American style and adopt full Indian culture. As Sheridan explains to Armstrong, the record manager, " We can still sell that Indian idea.... We can use these women. They've been on the reservations.... They really understand what it means to be Indian."(Alexie, 1995: 269).

These two white women changed the authentic culture of Indians since they intermingled blonde hair and white face with Native American clothes and culture. As seen, every modern wave into reservation destroys Indians culture and tradition. The colonizer tries to be the dominant power by exploiting the cultures and traditions of the colonized people. At the same time, the marginalized people attempt to embrace the culture of the dominant power at the expense of their inferiority feeling in the mainstream society: "a marginalized group adopting something from a dominant culture in a process of assimilation." (Chesterton, 2019: 1).

According to Alexie's protagonist, Thomas, nothing happened accidentally. He means by that all the traumatic history of Native Americans' displacement, mass killing, and the diseases that brought by Europeans. So, understanding and

remembering this bitter past is vital to the psychological well-being of the tribe. In the Spokane Reservation at Wellpinit in Washington, where Thomas lives there, Spokane's five generations are buried there just 65 miles away from Spokane Reservation, even though the weight of the cultural repository or misfit storyteller of the tribe, has ever "bowed his legs and bent his spine" (Alexie, 1995: 6). Beside that he continues in telling his stories in which no one is ready to hear even a sentence.

The novel reveals that Thomas attempts to work in contradiction of the willingness to forget and deny the reservation among the general population. Because of the communal memory and tribal past, Native Americans confront the loss of confidence and "nobody believed in anything on this reservation. All the Indians just dropped quarters into the jukebox, punched the same old buttons, and called that music. Thomas shared his stories with pine trees because people didn't listen" (Alexie, 1995: 28).

The official story of the dominant culture remains to reconstruct one's identity and misery past as represented in the historical monuments and markers, when all the tribal memories are kept inside. Cynically, the author depicts his people as indicating this form of history and it is all for monetary motives. Regarding the arrival of mythical bluesman Robert Johnson, he states: "The whole event required the construction of another historical monument. The reservation had been filled with those monuments years ago, but the Tribal Council still looked to build more, because they received government grants to do exactly that" (Alexie, 1995: 5). At the same time Thomas attempts to evoke his cultural inheritance and preserve Spokane's traditional rules, "most Indians don't follow those rules anymore" (1995: 5).

Alexie's Thomas is just like the figure of Cervantes' Don Quixote who is trying to be "as traditional as the twentieth century allowed" while fenced by people who are "as contemporary as cable television" (1995: 49). Thomas is kind with those who live around him, and he tries to observe them "as fragile as eggs, despite their warrior disguises" and in order to redeem this "little country" (1995: 16) of the reservation. In the view of Alexie's protagonist, it is not too late to preserve this little cultural heritage

which remains from their ancestors and it is better than losing everything in the contexts of modernity.

*Reservation Blues* introduces many Native American traditions and traditional characters as well. Big Mom is the same as Thomas in handling native authentic style. She does not live on the reservation but she lives on the top of the mountain near the Spokane Reservation. Alexie introduces her as the authentic tradition of Indian women. She is a mythical character. She is a powerful doctor for the Indians' illness of losing their tradition and authentic culture.

The author opens a new idea about Native American tradition as it faced illness and needs some good medicine to recover it from this grave illness. Thomas informs Victor about Big mom: " She's powerful medicine,"(1995: 199), in another discussion between Big Mom and the Coyote Springs, Big Mom introduces her to the band " I ain't Jesus. I ain't God," Big Mom said. " I'm just a music teacher." (1995: 209). So, Big Mom is the symbol of native tradition, because according to Big Mom tradition can be kept even in the flow of modernity and at the same time, it could be modified in order to survive. She describes the Indian men who believe that the hero has to carry guns, and he is not the hero who does not hurt people. They thought that Indian women cannot be a hero because only Indian men can do it. She states that these Indian men cannot survive in modern world because they are still "...standing by the drums at powwows," even they have lost their way how to be Indian and they have lost their culture, "... trying to remember how to sing in the Indian way." (1995: 209).

Big Mom tries to teach Michael White Hawk how to be a modern Indian and not to live in ancient beliefs. She states that Michael do not know anything about the musical instruments though he uses them "...in the same way that a bow and arrow is?" and she informs him that music is not to hurt humans because " Music is supposed to heal." (1995: 208), but he insists on using his saxophone to smash on white men's head because he hates the "white men"(1995: 208). Big Mom continues in warning Michael how to use music to save his Indian people and teaches him to change his mind because for nowadays violence is nonsense:



You run around playing like you're a warrior. You're the first to tell an Indian he's not being Indian enough. How do you know what that means? You need to take care of your people. Smashing your guitar over the head of a white man is just violence. And the white man has always been better at violence anyway. They'll always be better than you at violence. (1995: 208)

According to Big Mom violence is something that should remain in the past in order to continue with the authentic tradition in the present time. However, Native Americans ancestors play flute and drums, but guitar is a modern popular instrument. Therefore, guitar as a modern instrument must be used to serve native traditions. Indians can play it in their Indian way. Big Mom still plays flute for the slaughtered Indian horses and she can teach the Coyote Springs to play guitar successfully so that they introduce themselves as Indian guitarists. In Big Mom's view if Indians do not change their manner in this era of modernity, they have to change their mentality: "You can change your mind." (1995: 210), the modernity will destroy their tradition and living culture.

For Native Americans it is hard to accept all modern methods due to the fact that it is not a part of their ancestors' life in the past, rather modernity come into their life with the first step of the European invaders. Therefore, Alexie's characters who represent the real Native American tradition do not accept to live in the reservation. They start drinking alcohol, and women characters as Chess and Checkers refused white women and hate Indian men Victor and Junior who sleep with them. As such, alcohol is considered as the main modern way which destroyed all Native American beautiful ancestral traditions and all their authentic cultures replaced by alcohol. "Alcohol consumption was initiated among Indians when European colonists, intent on acquiring furs, skins, and slaves from the natives," (Velie, 2007: 7). Like an explosion, alcohol burned Indian's culture and tradition. Most of Alexie's characters are alcoholic or tell their stories of their suffering from their alcoholic parents. Hence, alcohol has affected all Alexie's characters directly or indirectly:

Victor had started to drink early in life, just after his real father moved to Phoenix, and he drank even harder after his step-father moved into house. Junior never drank until the night of his high school graduation. He'd sworn never to drink because of his parents' boozing. .... Thomas's father still drank quietly, never raising his voice once in all his life, just staggering around the reservation, usually covered in piss and shit. (Alexie, 1995: 57)

The protagonist, Thomas Builds-the Fire, describes his father's treatment with them while he was drunk. He uncovers how alcohol exploits everything and causes Indian men to destroy his family economically and psychologically. As he states that one night: "Dad got real drunk, kicked everybody out, and then took all the furniture out on the front lawn, and burned it." (1995: 118) This behaviour devastates all the family principles and brings negative attitude of the rest of family. Then, Thomas continues to tell the reaction of his mother towards his father after this night:

She kicked dad out. Divorced him Indian style, enit? Then we went to work for the tribe as a driver. She drove the Senior Citizens' van all over the countryside. Took the elders to every powwow. She got all traditional. Started dancing, singing, playing stick-game again. (1995: 118)

Hence there Alexie reveals that alcohol does not belong to Indians life style and culture. That is why Thomas's mother kicked this style of life and her husband and she returned to the authentic Indians life, and decided to work and take care of all Indians culture.

Alcohol is the negative side of modernity which has impact on the Native American tradition by humiliating it. At the same time, Native Americans face the terrible life conditions such as: unemployment, poverty and bad psychological condition because of their drunken life style. Thomas's family is a good sample of the Native American community. According to Alexie's view of nowadays Native American, in his novels all Indians are addicted to alcohol, and they forget their authentic life style as well as they live in modern American mainstream carelessly. They have to be awakened like Thomas's mother and take responsibility.

Among Native Americans, poverty is a disease that plagues them. Meanwhile, once they lived in harmony with nature and rich in tradition, customs and culture. In due season, Native Americans have become poor and were unable to get to the alien world's level due to "little exposure to formal education and the skills valued in a rapidly industrializing society" (Hellwig, 1982: 87). This is the focal cause that the indigenous people are victimized by the modern waves which are brought by the white invaders. For the most part, Coyote Springs is shaped with the hope of earning money and living a better life out of reservation. As Indians none of them leads an idealistic or even, happy life on the reservation. Lack of money is reflected in every family's daily life on the reservation. Thomas has got a little black and white TV. He always watches it to observe the white's life. Meanwhile, television is invented to relax and get information but the Indians by the mean of their television screens reveal that white people have ever got idealistic life enjoying food, money, valuable clothes, and houses, therefore television "constantly reminded Thomas of all he never owned." (Alexie, 1995: 70).

Poverty and hunger do not let them relax even in their dream. Alexie forms his protagonist as the leader of a band to dream about "television and hunger,". In Thomas's dream, "he sat, all hungry and lonely, in his house and wanted more." And he turns on his TV to watch white people lifestyle. Poverty is the same for all Indians but Alexie makes the Coyote Springs the representative of all. In their concerts Coyote Springs started with small performances on reservation, proving their hunger for good reputation, wealth and appreciation in order to collect little money. They arrive in Seattle and are unaware of having to participate in a competition between bands, just money is the main factor for them. When they are recommended to return by Victor, Thomas responses, "We don't have enough money to get home" (1995: 136). Lack of money deprives the band of all the opportunities.

For native Americans who live on the reservation, tragedy is the main part of their past. Thomas has lost his mother because of cancer and he has to survive with an ever-drunken father, who is a good player of basketball, but not successful. Thomas's father's tragic event is a kind of foreshadowing, in such a way, for Coyote Springs '

fate. Meanwhile, tragic experiences include everyone's story of life on the reservation. By the same way, Chess and Checkers confront a tragic event during their early life. Their brother, who is younger than them, died of illness and their mother died after him. Chess and Checkers were left with their drunken father and he drives mad because of over drinking alcohol. It makes them become poorer.

Alexie hardly tries to uncover all the problems which confronted Native Americans on the reservation, in an easy-going way. Though the novel is shaped as a blues novel, but dark humour turns readers attention to a different field of laughter. Beside all these tragic scenes and magic realism in the novel, Alexie uses humour to help his readers keep the emotional instability. In other words, Alexie shows tragedy humorously. However, the characters are homeless and moneyless or even alcoholic and they make the reader laugh in some situation, or the character shows a big problem while he smiles. For instance, when Thomas entered the Trading Post: "Thomas smiled and walked into the Trading Post, one of the few lucrative businesses on the reservation. Its shelves were stocked with reservation staples: Diet Pepsi, Spam, Wonder bread, and a cornucopia of various carbohydrates, none of them complex." (1995: 12). Additionally, in another humour scene of the novel, Thomas laughed when chess talked about his father who was the "one who killed Hitler." (1995: 120).

Furthermore, the novel *Reservation Blues* reveals all issues and blues which surrounded the Indian reservation. For this reason, Alexie makes the protagonist leave the reservation and live out in country. Thomas decides to leave the Spokane Reservation and choose to live in the city with two Flathead Indian sisters, Chess and Checkers. According to Chess all Indians on the reservation have been lost due to the modern life style which are brought by the White people. When they were on the graveyard to bury Junior, who committed suicide, Chess thought deeply about the graveyard and looked at" all the graves of Indians killed by white people's cars, alcohol, uranium. All those Indians who had killed themselves." (1995: 282). Hence, all the modern ways are used to kill Indians and make them lose their native tradition. As it is discussed before, Big Mom's character is the representative of Native American

tradition or tradition itself. So, when she knew Junior's suicide which does not belong to Indians tradition, she thought that it is to humiliate their tradition:

Big Mom felt weakness in her stomach, in her knees. She didn't know if she could even stand, let alone walk down her mountain. Another one of her students had fallen, and Big Mom had felt something fall inside her, too. Maybe all those bodies, those musicians, those horses had been stacked too high inside her. (1995: 278)

Big Mom is the symbol of Native Americans tradition and authentic culture. Music and horse are two powerful elements of Native American culture. Junior was a drum set player in the band so he did not only kill himself but also left a big hole in Indians culture of music. His hard life in the reservation made him kill himself. For this reason, Big Mom does not mind leaving reservation when she knows that Thomas leave the reservation, and she even helps him.

At the end of the novel, *Reservation Blues*, Big Mom reminds the reader some of the most important and authentic Indian tradition which is totally versus their modern culture. First, she starts with hospitality and feast that are the Indians ancestral culture, when she offered Thomas, Chess, and Checkers to eat something at the Longhouse, since there is a "feast at the Longhouse," (1995: 299). Second, she reminded them of an Indian superstition. It is when Thomas, Chess, and Checkers want to "leave on an empty stomach." Indians believe that " It's bad luck to travel on an empty stomach." (1995: 299). Then, she decided to give all her saved bucks. In addition to this, she used the word feast which "was a holdover from a more prosperous and traditional time," (1995: 300). This word was used before the Indians were obliged to live on the reservation. Moreover, eating fry bread is considered as one of the Native Americans tradition.

In many scenes Alexie mentions fry bread and even describes its content and how to make "Fry bread. Water, flour, salt, rolled and molded into shape, dropped into hot oil. A traditional food. A simple recipe," (1995: 47) and he states that Indians "could spend their whole lives looking for the perfect piece of fry bread." (1995: 47)

So when, Big Mom, Thomas, Chess, and Checkers entered the Longhouse every Indians fell into calmness. All of them waited the meal but there was no clue of the meal because of fry bread. However, there is enough deer meat, Pepsi, and potatoes but only one hundred fry bread and the Indians are two hundred. Big Mom takes the responsibility since she thinks that there is a way to distribute the fry bread "By ancient Indian secrets," (1995: 301) It is Indians ritual to pray and ask God before doing every activity. So, Big Mom took a piece of bread and kept it over her head and prayed. "Creator, help me. I have only a hundred piece of fry bread to feed two hundred people." (1995: 302) Then, she tore the fry bread into two pieces. After they finished their meal, Big Mom asked the Indians to collect money for Thomas and the Flathead Indian sisters because they have not enough money to leave the reservation. So, they collected enough money and left the Longhouse.

Thomas and two Flathead Indian sisters, Chess and Checkers move to Spokane, a predominantly white city. However, their journey from reservation to the city is an ambiguous one, but it is suggested by Alexie. He is fully certain that some of Indians have to attempt to discover it and achieve some success in the mainstream white world, instead of staying on the ever- stifling and annihilating reservation. Alexie describes the supernaturally appearance of horses keeping pace with their van as Thomas and the sisters leave the reservation. The ghosts of these horses can be regarded as a symbol which represents the Indian culture that Thomas and the girls need to keep with them in order to remain culturally and spiritually intact in the city. It seems that those horses are leading and following them to the mainstream life style since Alexie keeps these traditional characters, who are not affected by the modern waves of reservation and alcohol. While, they move to find better life in the city, they will confront another kind of modernity in the mainstream of America. Therefore, they have to be taken there by horses as the authentic Native American culture and tradition.

According to Alexie, they can survive with their authentic tradition in the modern world as they do not try to get beer to drink, they attempt to return to their originality as a musician and singer and hopefully "songs were waiting for them in the city" (1995: 306). Alexie indicates that these characters are going to be able to revive

their career as Native American musicians in Spokane, but this time with the help of their indigenous culture, without any support of Johnson's guitar, just only on the strong power of their individuality.

### **3.2 Adulthood and Spirit of Revolt in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian***

Sherman Alexie's novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a part-Time Indian* was published in 2007 in United States by Little Brown Company. It is Alexie's first novel for young adults. It tells the story of a 14 years old teenager's life. In the same year of its first publication, the novel wins The National Book Award for Young People's Literature. It has won many awards between 2007 to 2010 as well. It wins Boston-Globe Horn Book Award in 2008, and in 2009 wins The International Book on Books for Young People Sweden – Peter Pan Prize, in 2010 gets California Young Reader Medal. In addition, for the 2010 California Young Reader Medal, the book was a finalist (Jirsová, 2012: 24).

The novel is a semi-autobiographical narration. However, it is narrated from the first-person point of view, but the draft was originally written in the third person. Alexie states that he appreciates himself tremendously because of using Native American voice for his novel. Soon, Alexie realizes that the emotional distance was created by such kind of narrative and thus it was useless. Besides, he declares that the use of third person voice was done unconsciously, as he scares of his particular history. Even though, Alexie is not so innovator to dress up the autobiography of life story and history for young audience, his book is tremendously successful (Harmanci, 2007: 1).

Arnold Spirit, Junior, is the protagonist of Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a part-Time Indian*. He is fourteen years old. Junior lives near Wellpinit city on the Spokane Indian Reservation with his parents. He also attends school on the Indian reservation and he is thrilled to start high school with his friends on the reservation. His favourite subject is geometry. When he knows that his mother studied the same book of geometry in high school, he is so angry for the school's disability to change old books and replace it with new one. He throws the book at the instructor's face and

breaks his teacher's nose. His parents and grandmother were angry with Junior's behaviour, they punished and suspended him. Following this event, Junior tries to see his teacher for apologizing for this misdeed. After that, Junior's instructor, Mr. P, talks with Junior calmly and he advises him to transfer to a school off the Reservation. Studying at the high school off reservation has become a part of Junior's plan in his mind and he reveals it to his parents.

Junior starts school at Reardan High School. He is ignored and bothered at the beginning. He gets into a battle with a boy who makes bigot remarks at that point gets a boy who is exceptionally shrewd. Junior soon loves a girl named Penelope. Junior's popularity is sealed when he and Penelope become something of an "item." He is happy at Reardan and he makes the basketball team with his friends there, in spite of the fact that he frequently must walk half or all of the distance way because of the limited resources of his parents. Junior's life on the Reservation is not brilliant. As Junior's parents predicted, numerous people irritated him for he challenged to dream for something which the Reservation cannot offer him. Rowdy, Junior's best friend, is one of those who are angry at him and make Junior's life hopeless on the reservation.

On the basketball court, Junior confronts Rowdy. He is rather angry at him to the point he waits the chance to take him out of the game. With the starting of the next game, Junior hardly attempts to take the lead from Rowdy and the Reardan team successes effortlessly. Immediately Junior is embarrassed for his wish for revenge and exact retribution since he is familiar with the difficult conditions of life lived by the other members of the team.

Like the other novels by Alexie, the protagonist's life is filled with death. Junior sees that his dears are dead around him as a result of alcohol. For example, his grandmother's death, a drunk driver runs over his grandmother and dies. One of the best friends of his father is shot and murdered over a drink. At the same time, his sister is intoxicated in her mobile house with her husband when a fire destroys it. His sister indeed never wakes and is burned to death.



At the end of the story, after school has got out for the summer season, Rowdy comes to visit Junior. Rowdy states, however he's still annoyed at Junior but is uninterested. Rowdy exposes that he has continuously known Junior would like to decide to leave and live off the Reservation and asks Junior to promise him to send messages from wherever he goes. Then they spend night playing basketball with each other, but none of them gained even a score. (Alexie, 2007)

Alexie's best young adult novel is criticized by the critics and scholars positively and by parents and school boards negatively. This led to a controversy since it was banned from many schools because of its content and the committee of school banned novel. According to (Marshall University Libraries), more than twelve schools complained about Alexie's novel. For instance, in 2015 the book had been challenged from the high school of Meridian (ID) and additional reading list after complaining about the novel by some parents. The complaint reveals that the novel "discusses masturbation, contains profanity, and has been viewed as anti-Christian." (Aulia, 2017: 4) The novel also states about Native Americans poverty on the reservation, depression, racism, physical abuse, sexual and gang fighting which were all practiced by the main character, Junior, as a Native American. In short, in Native American literature, there is still a limitation for both the author and the reader. Only a few of Native American authors want to talk about Indians, and uncover the reality of Native Americans life.

Kathleen Noone is another scholar who shows her attitude about Sherman Alexie's novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. She states that the novel is a story of coming-of-age boy. It is composed in first person narrative from the point of view of fourteen-year-old Arnold Spirit Jr, better known as Junior. As the title of the novel proposes, the narrative includes a confessional attribute, as Junior uncovers his sentiments to the per-user through utilizing his visual and verbal language. Noone tries to look at the style or technique which Alexie uses in his Young Adult novel as well.

In addition to this, she reveals that the style is humorous and frequently disrespectful, because Junior is sometimes aggressively honest about his feelings and

encounters. In spite of the fact that this may be not comfortable for the reader from time to time, such as when Junior learns about the passing of his sister and is concerned about it since, "Yep, I had a big erection when I learned of my sister's death" (Alexie, 2007: 202), and she argues that this quality helps the protagonist's voice to be so authentic. The novel's ongoing action is united with an exploration and studying of the emotions and feelings of Junior.

Furthermore, the use of cartoons has shown a thematic connection to the destitution experienced by Junior and his community of Native Americans on the reservation. There is a purpose behind Junior's drawings, he draws for he "want[s] the world to pay attention to [him]" (2007: 6) and he sees drawing as the "only way [he] can become rich and famous." (2007: 6) Junior recognizes that being wealthy and well – known "might be [his] only real chance to escape the reservation." (2007: 6).

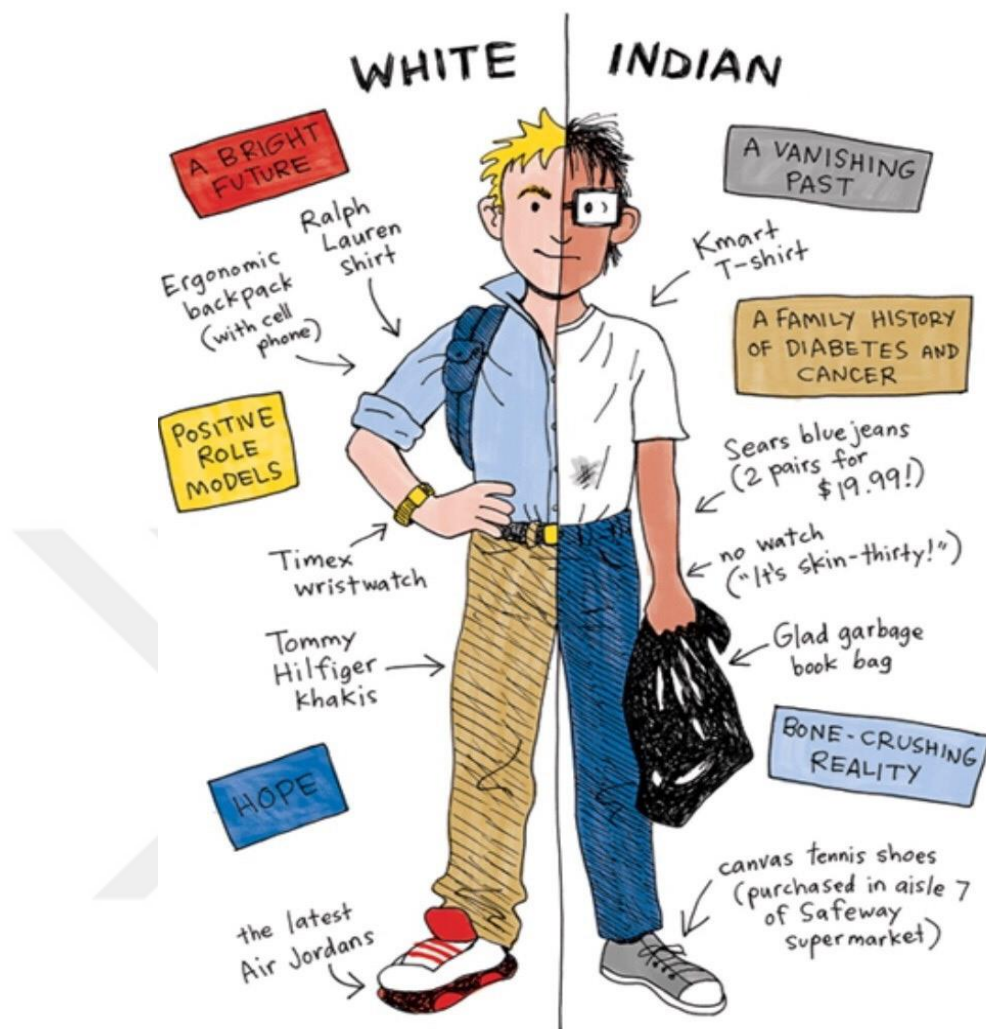
Despite the commonly positive response, the full of praise reviews, and the significant literary valuable prizes which the book was awarded, there are also a number of voices criticizing Alexie's crude portrayal of incongruent issues, for example, sex, bullying, xenophobia or, even, the fierce deaths of some of Alexie's characters in the story. According to some parents, school boards, and libraries such unambiguous interpretations of the squalor and showing anguish on Indian reservations are absolutely inappropriate for young readers ' and sensitive in feeling. Junior's idea after the death of one of his best father's friend is rather shocked: "And, after Eugene's funeral, I agreed with her. I could have easily killed myself, killed my mother and father, killed birds, killed the trees, and killed the oxygen in the air. More than anything. I wanted to kill God." (2007: 173) Whereas it is genuine that some of the perspicuous violence, sexual situations and irreverent verbal may even appear troubling to adult readers and have the negative influence on this class of society (Ibarrola, 2016: 182).

*The Absolutely True Diary* mingles words and draw images to portray the valiant journey which is taken by a Native American Indian fourteen years old boy away from a family and community devastated and often ruined by the problematic issues as poverty and alcoholism "to somewhere beyond the boundaries of his

reservation where he can look for hope and a better future." (Armendariz, 2015: 185) This journey is certainly not so easy and it frequently encompasses breaking considerable blockades for one who is adult: alienating himself from his authentic culture, lose contact with his best childhood friend, becoming adjusted to an entirely new environment, etc. Maybe the most difficult scene of Junior's transmutation throughout the novel is his understanding that it will be impossible for him to attempt to find even a single place as home in Reardan High:

Traveling between Reardan and Wellpinit, between the little white town and the reservation, I always felt like a stranger. I was half Indian in one place and half white in the other. It was like being Indian was my job, but it was only a part-time job. And it didn't pay well at all. (2007: 118)

It is unquestionable that Junior is continuously attacked by doubts approximately which environment he must initiate his faithfulness to, since in both environments, he finds attractive but also ugly elements: certainly, there is a great deal of deprivation, endemic alcoholism and ferocity on the Indian reservation, and in Reardan there is also racism, class-mindfulness and ineffectiveness, as well (Ibarrola, 2016: 185).



This image is taken from page 57 of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* which is drawn by Ellen Forney. It portrays the impact of modern society on Junior. In fact, it portrays the torn personality of Junior. He does not lose only his tradition but also his whole personality is changed. Half of him is white and the other half is Indian. It also depicts the difference between life on the reservation and one who lives there and life in predominant white city and one who lives there.

The *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is generally about venturing two societies, convention and present-day culture, in which there is a conflict among

custom and advancement in a point of view way. ... When the genuine Sherman Alexie left the Spokane Reservation, similarly as his change sense of self, Junior, does in the book, he was looked with a totally changed culture from the one he had known as long as he can remember. Also, they were looked with him, as well. Junior makes it work, similarly as Sherman did, all things considered, and it is difficult to envision an all the more testing human undertaking, yet Sherman has an unequivocally held reasoning about the gathering of societies: When you talk about culture, in the event that you make a relationship with the heart, it's hazardous to believe that you must be monogamous. Rather, you should most likely begin to look all starry eyed at rapidly and effectively with different cultures.

As Sherman Alexie addresses humanitarian issues in his novels, he is loved by people all over the world, people from every walk of life. In an interview with Sherman Alexie (quoted by Blasingame), Alexie comments on his life and how people look at him:

People look at me and make a connection; they intuitively believe that I am half of whatever they are. Humour plays a big part, but also, I appeal to universal aspects of life, like the feeling of being trapped by this or that .... But another reason that I appeal to people is that everybody loves Indians....

That's one of the things I try to teach Indian kids today. Our own elders have taught us that we're hated, and the truth is that we're not. People love Indians. Everywhere I go in the world, Indian people are admired. It worries me when people tell Indian kids to leave their hearts behind when they leave the rez because that implies that the world is a dangerous place for our hearts and it's not. There are so many allies out there, and if you don't bring your heart, you won't find them. (qtd. 2008: 72)

### **3.2.1 The Clash Between Tradition and Modernity in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian***

Sherman Alexie expertly writes *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, to focus on the conflict between Indian traditions on the reservation and

modern life off the reservation. He also decides bravely which place brings hope. Of course, there is not even a common point between these two environments, as Alexie states: " Reardan was the opposite of the rez." (Alexie, 2007: 56). For this purpose, Alexie makes the protagonist, Arnold Spirit, transmit from Spokane Indian Reservation to Reardan, a small White American city. Spokane Indian Reservation is a place where established upon Indian tradition and customs.

In the novel, Arnold identifies Indian culture completely: " powwow celebration... singing, war dancing, gambling, storytelling, laughter, fry bread, hamburgers, hot dogs, arts and crafts, and plenty of alcoholic brawling." (Alexie, 2007: 17) As such, he distinguishes between good and bad cultures. According to Arnold singing and dancing are two great cultures of Indians and he describes those Indians who are not singers or dancers as talentless, rhythmless, and tuneless, and he is afraid of them since those Indians probably will get drunk and hit any "available losers" and he is constantly " the most available loser." (Alexie, 2007: 17) In addition, one of the most restricted tradition of Indians which Arnold uncovered for the reader is that Indians have a habit of remaining in only one place, and this tradition makes a blockade in front of Arnold to leave Indian reservation.

Arnold tells the wistful story of his early life on the reservation, but in a humorous way. Humour is Alexie's tactic in opening the sordid situation or criticizing the specific destination, especially Indians on the reservation. At the beginning of the novel Arnold describes his body build and his unhealthy brain. He states that he was born with hydrocephalus, water in the brain, but he survived in a surgery. He had a crowded mouth with forty-two teeth, ten more teeth than normal human. So, he goes to the dentist to pull out the extra teeth all in one day. The white dentist gives him a half Novocain. He claims that the dentist thinks that Indians feel half pain. When he describes his eyes, he says "my eyes are, like, enemies, you know, like they used to be married to each other but now hate each other's guts." (Alexie, 2007: 3) When he was three years old, he wore glasses and he narrates that he runs around the reservation like a grandfather in three years old. He continues in describing his body completely:

My hands and feet were huge. My feet were size eleven in third grade! With my big feet and pencil body, I looked like a capital *L* walking down the road. And my skull was enormous. My head was so big that little Indian skulls orbited around it. Some of the kids called me Orbit. And other kids just called me Globe. The bullies would pick me up, spin me in circles.... (2007: 3)

Beside all these physical problems, he was the target of fun by the people on the reservation. The reader cannot control laughing for Alexie uses humour. And he finds away for Arnold to get far from these awful situations. So, Arnold draw cartoons instead of talking with stutter and a lisp and any reaction to all these miseries. He had a very hard life condition on the reservation especially with his boy friends who were always beating him and were making fun of him. This makes him think about escape from the reservation and finding out a better life outside but he thinks he could not escape from all these unappropriated cultures. For this reason, he thinks to stay at home in his bedroom alone since it is safer than going around this society on the rez. In his bedroom he always reads books and draws cartoons.

He draws cartoons because he thinks that words are very limited and unpredictable and all the world will understand cartoons " So I draw because I want to talk to the world. And I want the world to pay attention to me." (Alexie, 2007: 6) Here Alexie wants to reveal that the adults have different dreams and they have significant things to show to the world. As it can be seen in this story rich and famous are two main dreams of Arnolds every day thinking and the only one way to get to his dreams is to escape from Indian reservation, a centre of Indian tradition. From Arnold's view of life adults do not want to stick to the tradition and culture since the circle of tradition do not let the new generation hang up towards the modern way of invention. Tradition is a closed circle, humans have to remain in this circle, and Alexie here breaks down this circle by telling his early life story through the novel via Arnold.

Junior is not the one who sticks forever to the Indian tradition, when Rowdy, his best friend on the reservation told him to come to the Spokane powwow celebration. Junior refused to go to powwow since he thinks that home is safer for him

than powwows, but Rowdy insists on taking him to the party. He is not excited about the party at all but about the chicken dancers and this is for his main purpose " I think the chicken dancers are cool, well, they dance like chickens. And you already know how much I love chicken." (Alexie, 2007: 19) Here Junior tells the reader that tradition is not so important when human is in need of life necessities. Junior feels hungry and likes chicken at that situation and he needs to fill up his stomach not to watch powwows. As such, poverty signifies the existence of the protagonist, and food in the powwows' Indians tradition is just for watching not filling the empty stomach and get rid of hunger.

Junior feels happy about his first day of high school, when he was fourteen years old. He was most particularly enthusiastic about his first geometry class. A geometry teacher Mr. P at Wellpinit High School distributes geometry books. Junior opened his book and is shocked when he saw his mother's name " Agnes Adams" (Alexie, 2007: 31) on the inside front cover of the geometry book. He realizes that the book is thirty years older than him. It is the same book which his parents studied on. He understands that science will not change on the reservation. He is astonished at this: " My school and my tribe are so poor and sad that we have to study from the same dang books our parents studied from." (2007: 31) For Junior it is a horrible and absolutely the most miserable thing in the world he has ever seen. He considers all his dreams are gone with the wind. He is overpowered with humiliation and anger as a result he threw the book at his teacher and smashed his face. He broke Mr. P's nose.

The author clearly encourages the adults to prevent old things in their life, and go towards their dream and modern things. Junior's mind is totally new. He likes new books. He loves living in new places far from the reservation. The book has become Indian tradition, since it is as much old as it is handed down from parents to children.

Junior apologizes for this accident. He is very regretful and sorry about his teacher's face with a big bandage on his nose. Junior considers that his teacher will punish or kill him. But it is not the idea of Junior's teacher to take revenge and he sits and talks with him in a peaceful and friendly manner. Soon his teacher knows about



the reaction of Junior to the old book. All these are due to his ability and at the same time he can't stand looking for only culture and tradition. Therefore, the teacher forgives Junior for his unconscious behaviour.

Junior and his teacher have the same aim of reforming Indian culture. Junior believes that ancestral tradition and culture are something remaining in the past, and regarded as a dead thing nowadays. His purpose behind hitting is not hurting a living person but hitting an inanimate object as he claims: " I was planning on hitting something, you know? Like the wall or desk or the chalkboard. Something dead, you know, not something alive." (Alexie, 2007: 34) According to Junior the Geometry book is as old as the walls, chalkboards, and desks of the school, and all these unchangeable things have become the Indian tradition on the reservation.

Moreover, according to Mr. P all things need to be changed, and humans can give up some old cultures at the expense of the new and honourable culture. For example, he tells about his old behaviour with Indian students " When I first started teaching here, that's what we did to the rowdy ones, you know? We beat them." But now he changed his mind and he calmly asked Junior to forgive him since he believes it is " the only thing that keeps me from smacking you with an ugly stick."

Additionally, Mr. P considers that these cultures of smashing and hitting are planted by the colonizers in order to kill their authentic cultures. He means that they are cultivated to assimilate Indian culture, as he states " That's how we were taught to teach you." White teachers were understood to make Indians to cease being Indian. They tried to kill Indian's songs, stories, language, and dancing, as Mr. P reveals it clearly to Junior and argues, " We weren't trying to kill Indian people. We were trying to kill Indian culture." (Alexie, 2007: 35) But now everything has changed. Unlike the past days Mr. P wants to forgive Junior as an Indian student but he could not apologize to the rest of the students that he hurt them before.

Despite of blaming himself, Mr. P recommends Junior to leave the reservation. He thinks that everything on the reservation is bad but Junior is the good thing. When

Junior tells his story with Rowdy his dearest friend, that Rowdy hits everybody on the reservation but loves Junior from his childhood. He has never hit him. He always helps Junior especially when someone bullies Junior. He does not let the time pass for taking revenge on those who tormented Junior. When Junior tells that Rowdy does not hurt him, Mr. P replies Junior that is because " you're the only good thing in his life." (2007: 42) He informs Junior that Indian kids are only taught how to give up things especially their dreams. If they have their own dream, they have to keep it secret because of being shy and being laughed at. Junior's sister wants to be a writer but she is obliged to keep it secret for the special reason as Mr. P tells Junior that " She was shy about it." since she continuously "taught people would make fun of her." (2007: 37) Here, he blames the Indian society on the reservation for not receiving any new idea.

### **3.2.2 From Reservation to Reardan: A Journey from Tradition to Modernity**

Alexie's protagonist finds the way which reaches him to his dreams. Junior obeys Mr. P advices when he told him to leave the reservation forever. Mr. P reads something inside Juniors personality. Soon he realizes that Junior is not like the rest of Indians on the reservation, he has a hope and he could not give up his hope, but all the Indians, all his friends, bullies, father, and mother have given up. But Junior will not as Mr. P tells him " You can't give up. You won't give up. You threw that book in my face because somewhere inside you refuse to give up." (2007: 43). Furthermore, he encourages Junior not to give up and he should follow his hope. He reminds Junior of all his hard condition which are controlled by himself:

You fought off that brain surgery. You fought off those seizures. You fought off all the drunks and drug addicts. You kept your hope. And now, you have to take your hope and go somewhere where other people have hope.... You're going to find more and more hope the farther and farther you walk away from this sad, sad, sad reservation. (2007: 43)

Alexie portrays the protagonist's miserable and problematic life, full of misery and problems. At the same time, he makes him grasp upon all his problems such as: physical problems, and overmaster in front of the society which is full of addicts with alcohol. In spite of all these huge problems, he has kept his hope. Here, Alexie has something important to adults, hope is superior to all the issues of life. He wants to warn the adults to pass everything behind themselves in order to fulfil their hope. Besides, the one who has new things must try hard and free himself from customs, cultures, and tradition of the society which probably block the new changes awaiting him. Humans have to break down all boarders to get to their dreams just like Junior.

Junior cannot endure old geometry book. This means something different and new is reflected in the inner side of Junior. He has a dream. It is his dream to study modern things not the same as his parents studied. In order to hold on his dream, he has to do something different from Indians. On the Indians reservation everything is old and handed down from generation to generation. So, Junior has to take his hope and get out of reservation. His parents do not mind but they are afraid of the reaction of other Indians on the reservation. Junior's mom said: " The Indians around here are going to be angry with you." (2007: 47). Even his best friend Rowdy did not accept his decision as Junior said: " He got up, stared me hard in the eyes..." (2007: 49). Rowdy punched Junior and failed him to the ground and his nose bled like a fountain. When he stands, he states: " I knew that my best friend had become my worst enemy." (2007: 53). It is not accepted by the Indians to live out of the reservation since they believe that the Indian reservation is a great part of their tradition. If someone chooses to live off the reservation, the Indians will regard it as insurgence from Indian tradition and culture.

The first thing which the new place gives him is that the white students know him as Arnold instead of Junior. The Indians on the reservation named him Junior because of his physical problems. They regard him as lower than the others on the reservation.

The novel's main tension is initiated when Junior chooses to transfer to a predominant white city's school, Reardan High School. It is a school inhabited completely by white students. Most of them are from middle-to-upper-class family and this makes Junior the only stranger non-white one among them. Junior's choice to move from the high school in his reservation is not only powered by the fact that Indians on the reservation are heartlessly aggressive towards him, but also by a rising consciousness of the inactivity and stability encouraged by the reservation. Besides, soon he realizes that none of Indians in his reservation have ever gone to college. Moreover, his awareness and mindfulness of how social maladies like alcoholism pollute his environment to the degree which kills people he loves, such as his dear grandmother and his sister. As Arnold indicates at the end of the novel:

I cried because so many of my fellow tribal members were slowly killing themselves and I wanted them to live. I wanted them to get strong and get sober and get the hell out of the rez. It's a weird thing. Reservations were meant to be prisons, you know? Indians were supposed to move into reservations and die. We were supposed to disappear. But somehow or another, Indians have forgotten that reservations were meant to be death camps. (2007: 216-217)

Leaving the high school of the reservation is viewed by most residents of Spokane as a betrayal. In order to make things even more complicated, Arnold rapidly understands that he is seen as an outcast by others as the only Indian in Reardan High School. Moreover, he is sorry for Indians who live on the reservation unchangeably, he points out, "I wept because I was the only one who was brave and crazy enough to leave the rez. I was the only one with enough arrogance." (2007: 217). He wishes all Indians on the reservation change and could leave reservation and find better life outside.

Arnold therefore creates and develops in social borderlands. He isn't white, and he isn't Native American. Notwithstanding, Arnold's decision to leave the booking doesn't involve "haughtiness" (2007: 217) as he later suggests in the novel, but instead, it is a choice driven by the longing for a decent life. The idea of social overlooking turns into a significant component in the novel, particularly when concentrating on the

booking as a space of death, liquor abuse, and pulverization. Arnold perceives that the booking has some lovely characteristics, particularly with regards to the safeguarding of antiquated traditions and conventions. Notwithstanding, he comes to comprehend that this protection and preservation accompany a value: stability, demise, and staleness... Returning to the idea of versatility versus dormancy and convention versus development, Arnold doesn't take a distinct position with regards to these issues, and on occasion, he even appears to repudiate himself when making a decision about custom and conservatism as positive or negative. He perceives that idleness and custom are in some cases self-attacking and on occasion unreasonable, yet he additionally takes care to bring up cases in which convention is by all accounts considerably all the more illuminating and liberal when contrasted with contemporary and the sky is the limit from there "advanced" types of reasoning. This is especially observed when Arnold portrays his grandma, who clung to increasingly traditional ideologies:

Now, in the old days, Indians used to be forgiving of any kind of eccentricity. In fact, weird people were often celebrated. Epileptics were often shamans because people just assumed that God gave seizure-visions to the lucky ones. Gay people were seen as magical, too. I mean, like in many cultures, men were viewed as warriors and women were viewed as caregivers. But gay people, being both male and female. were seen as both warriors and caregivers. Gay people could do anything. They were like Swiss Army knives! (2007: 155)

In view of this, the pressure of the novel is put together not with respect to the fight among convention and change, yet rather on the battle between acknowledging contrast and taking out distinction. I figure it would be excessively oversimplified and innocent to approach Arnold's take-off from his booking as a demonstration of absorption or as an appearance of a white-washing feeling. I'd preferably approach his take-off as a push to take a stab at distinction, as a push to live, and as a departure from complete digestion. Besides, Arnold's take-off drives him to understand that he doesn't have a place with one clan, yet to many: "I understood that, beyond any doubt, I was

a Spokane Indian. I had a place with that clan. In any case, I likewise had a place with the clan of American migrants. What's more, to the clan of ball players. Furthermore, to the clan of bibliophiles. Also, to the clan of visual artists. . ." (2007: 217). Subsequently, as opposed to endeavouring to hold fast to thoughts of way of life as an individualized substance, Arnold comes to comprehend, through his departure, that oneself is pluralistic and multifaceted (Matos, 2014).

Finally, Arnold is successful in his decision and he develops a sharp consciousness through challenging the status quo (that of his new school) and his culture (that of his reservation school) to create his own identity and individuality. At Reardan, his academic success is allowed to flourish; however, his awareness of Spokane traditions is not necessarily promoted.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, Native American literature is the main and only way to articulate the Native American traumatic history. Displacement, deprivation, assimilation, and loss of culture and tradition and confused identity are parts of Native Americans' life from Columbus' arrival so far. The story narrators have the main role in recording Native Americans' hard life. Unfortunately, American Indians suffer now, too. They are unable to create a world of pure Indian's, but literature somehow foments their injury. Most Native American authors focus on Native American authentic tradition and culture. According to Native Americans homeland, language, religion, and their special lifestyle are their identity whilst they lost all these properties in different ways. Meanwhile, identity is considered as the protector of culture and tradition and vice versa. Native American culture assimilates as a result of modernity. They consider that life out of the reservation is far from their tradition. Otherwise, with the loss of identity and tradition, the real character will also be lost. It is the case of a people that fail to identify themselves in a self-assured, and a self-confident manner. It is truly a disaster. It causes marginalization and it also devastates society and its civilization. The same thing was done and is done in the Native American community. For the sake of a pure Indian quest, Native American authors have an individualistic way of writing. As such, Sherman Alexie is a famous individualist. Through his way of writings, he tries hard to revive his culture and tradition.

Sherman Alexie in both novels *Reservation Blues* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* portrays Native American society on the reservation. He exposes that Native Americans authentic tradition goes through the wrong field as a result of Europeans colonization. With the arrival of Europeans, they attained a modern style of life such as alcoholism and life on the reservations.

Nowadays Native Americans consider living on the reservation is part of their Indian tradition. Meanwhile, their life on the reservation is filled with drinking alcohol, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and suicide. Alexie portrays the real picture of the Native American society on the reservation without omitting a small piece of it.

Sherman Alexie regards alcohol as a new Native American identity or culture. At the same time, he thinks that alcohol is an Indian killer. In his writings, Alexie draws readers attention to all the issues which Native Americans confronted on the reservation. Besides, he depicts the Native American authentic tradition and fake tradition. Also, he wants to inform the reader that Native American ancestral tradition is far from the Native American tradition of the present time.

According to Alexie escape from the reservation is a way to find the pure Indian life. In his novels, Alexie always recommends the protagonist to choose a new life out of the Indian reservation. He shows that Indians out of reservation can reach all their dreams and find a world far from Indian cultures of alcohol, poverty, and committing suicide.

Furthermore, tradition makes a huge obstacle in front of humans to change or choose a new lifestyle excessively. Tradition and culture can be modified over time. With the progress of the world industrially, technologically, constitutionally, and sometimes linguistically human beings will change involuntarily. If a special nation so restricts itself to the ancestral traditions, this group of people will remain behind the civilized and modern community. Here time will decide on these changes which happen in human life. Additionally, time cannot be stopped. Continuity and progress are the prominent characteristics of time. Human must go side by side the time. Otherwise, human beings will remain behind and cannot reach their dreams.

Additionally, change in Alexie's works dominates a large area. Throughout his writings, Alexie hardly attempts to show Indians that their life in a constant way will lose their identity and all their properties. Indians are accustomed to spending their life only on the reservation drinking alcohol. For this reason, Alexie makes the protagonist change his life and find a better life off the Indian reservation.

Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is a heartfelt and valuable novel. However, it is a complex one, but it is analysable at the same time. The novel is rich with information about Native American culture, tradition, and their lifestyle on the reservation. The reader can easily get a lot of facts



about Native American culture during his rambling through the book. Besides, the novel provides the reader with some other perceptions into the exclusive associations that human beings can progress with their own cultures and live correspondingly with another different civilization and community. Extensively as a graphic book, the portrayals of the pictures in the book donated to the story's explanation just to the same extent that words do. As it can be seen in Arnold's confusing painting between white and brown, and Junior or Arnold. It shows the huge difference between life or personality on the Indian reservation or Indian tradition and lifestyle in the modern mainstream of America's civilized city.

*Reservation Blues* is Sherman Alexie's first and successful novel. He portrays the clear distinction between the two authentic Native American tradition and the adapted traditions of Native Americans on the reservation. Through the characters of Thomas, the protagonist, and Big Mom, the magic one, Alexie depicts the real and ancestral Native American tradition. In addition to this, the Indian tribes show another aspect of Native American tradition. The tribes on the reservation refused to combine the white world out of the reservation. So, when Thomas founded Coyote Springs band and sings pop songs in the white society, he is hardly criticized by the tribes on the reservation. The Indian tribes on the reservation believe that the band would be unable to find their culture and tradition easily in the white majority society. Henceforth, they clash with their achievement on the way to acculturation. However, the tribes rejected the modern white society, but Thomas challenged to leave the reservation's poverty, alcoholic community, and homelessness and finding a better life far from all the problems on the reservation.

Alexie ended the novel with the song of hope especially when the protagonist leaves the reservation so as to encourage the whole Indians to leave the reservation, since Indians lost their real identity. Instead, they adopted a new identity or tradition of alcoholism, homelessness, poverty, and desperation.

Through these two novels, the reader can easily understand Alexie's main aim from the Native American society's point of view. Alexie admits that life of Native

Americans on the reservation is chained by a horrible field of Indian tradition. He believes that Indians need to escape from the reservation and intermingle with a new and different community in order to get a modern style of life and keep themselves from the routine of isolation on the reservation.

According to Alexie Indians can keep their tradition and culture anywhere, and they can find their new and hopeful identity. He thinks that Indians on the reservation are always deprived of a modern and developed life nowadays. He shows this in his adult novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* when Junior the protagonist refused to study the same book which his parents studied on. For this reason, he decides to leave the reservation and study the new book in the city of white modern society. Besides that, he carries a new identity out of the Indian reservation. On the reservation, the Indians always called him Junior while the white society called him Arnold. Sherman Alexie's writing is both positive and negative about customs and culture. He can demonstrate how some of the time by declining to relinquish certain customs, life is made more earnestly for the Indians while in the meantime, he additionally perceives that the white world forces things on Indians as a result of their personality. He demonstrates the predicament of the Native American Indian as having this duality. It is an inquiry to which there is no answer so to a limited extent, what Alexie endeavours to do is featuring this struggle.

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LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZ ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

09/07/2019

Tez Başlığı / Konusu:

TRADITION VERSUS MODERNITY IN SHERMAN ALEXIE'S *RESERVATION BLUES* AND *THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN*

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