

Women and Marginalisation of Indian People in Alien Lands with Reference to George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to highlight the literary ability of George Ryga presenting the views of Ryga through Rita Joe. He achieved National exposure with *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* in 1967. This drama employs the literary technique the *stream of consciousness*. This paper brings out the sense of marginality that Indians face in Canada. Thus, this paper analyses the ratio of marginalization that Indian people, particularly Indian Women like Rita, face in an alien land.

Keywords: George Ryga, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, Marginality, Accusation, Native, Subjugation, Patriarchal Society.

Literature shows the worldly image with many different views. *Literature* is a Latin term. Literature is the life of creative art which reflects the society with multi-colour. It contains various genres in many forms. Canadian Literature mostly focuses on the origin of Canada people. Canadian region is wealthy because of their plantation of geographical structure, language, community, culture and tradition. To explore their suppression, they began to write many novels, drama and poetry. Overcoming many obstacles, these writers marked themselves as writers. As a Canadian writer George Ryga exposes the idea of social and political history of Canada. George Ryga was born in Athabasca, Alberta to poor immigrant parents. He was not able to do his schooling past grade six. He worked in various jobs such as radio copy writer and so on. Ryga continued his education towards winning a scholarship to the Banff School of Fine Arts. While living in Edmonton, he published his first book, *Song of My Hands* (1956), a collection of poems. George Ryga was catapulted to fame with *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe and Other Plays* (1970), a depiction of the plight of Indians as they struggle with Marginalization. Most of the common themes he used in his works are to explore the problems such as self-doubt, isolation and personal unfulfillment.

He lived between July 27, 1932 - November 18, 1987. Since 2004, the George Ryga award for social awareness in literature is established. *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* opened at the Queen Elizabeth playhouse in Vancouver, British Columbia, on November 23, 1967. The setting of the play was Brachiating staging technique of circular ramp. No curtain was used during the play. For isolating scenes from the past and present, they used the idea of highlight lighting to suggest gloom and confusion. He explored the realistic mind of Canadian White.

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The protagonist is Rita Joe. As a woman she was victimized and marginalised because she belonged to native people community. She leaves the reservation for the city. White people accused innocent Rita Joe with the criminal case of vagrancy, theft, prostitution, alcoholism, drugs, etc. American Magistrate commands Rita "Let her speak for herself!". Rita recounts her acquisition along with Jamie Paul who supports her as a native person. They both are unsuccessful achieving their goals dreamt by them. Marginality corners their journey of life to death. "The cement made her feet hard." -- once said by Rita, these words reveal not only her voice but also her whole community who got exploited by many people. George Ryga views "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe" as revealing overwhelming emotion of the protagonist. She leaves the reserved area of native Indians to Canadian Whites to fulfil her freedom with job. Police arrested her for various cases which she was not even aware of. Rita Joe was subjugated by patriarchal society. She experienced her journey bittersweet with unfamiliar environment, unacquainted social norms which compelled her to face psychological problems. Ryga presents the internal conflict of Joe in every situation.

"Magistrate: No-body is a prisoner here." (page number: 4)

This line from Ryga's "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe" clearly shows that he should follow the law of government with actions to truthful, but in contrast he makes this only by his words. Joe's dream was totally unsuccessful because she got arrested due to a false statement of five dollars. The horrible situation shows the true face of patriarchal society. Even the witness for Rita Joe is difficult to hear; they all protest against her for past vengeance. While she made her opinion towards the society as a woman, no one gave a hand to get success. By their cruel thoughts, each and every person in court room wanted her to be ideal without any voice over the law of government. Magistrate's charge against Rita is vagrancy. She replies with an innocent answer

"Rita: I didn't know when morning came... there was no windows... The Jail stinks! People in Jail Stink." (page number: 10)

She has undergone immense suffering. Canadian Whites' perspective is to marginalize her through gender as a woman. Rita desired in her thought to go home where she would be able to get full freedom without any accusation. Women are affected through the view of society both physically mentally. To overcome this situation, women have to face a great struggle. It was shown in Ryga's play by his protagonist Rita Joe.

Rita: What's so special about a girl. (page number 28)

Magistrate: I would wish... well, I'd be concerned about her choices, her choice of living, school... friends... These things don't come as lightly for a girl. For boys it's different... But I would worry if I had a daughter...Don't" (page number 29)

The above lines say women need not take any decision by themselves. Sentences reveal that women are used as objects in the society. From Magistrate's words it is evident that not only his daughter should follow the rules and norms but also every women around world make their voice numb as idol. Each scenario reveals make chauvinistic idealism in Canadian society.

Rita: I was hungry. I had no money.

Experience of marginality is faced in their life in every blood shed situation of natives. Not only by race they are dominated, but also through their tradition, and geographical background. To lead a life in another country they should change even the name. "There is no peace in being extraordinary."

Jamie: I'm scared of in... in the city. They don't care for one another here... You got to be smart or have a good job to live like that. (page number: 83)

Rita involving an experience of mystic self-transcendence. Jamie Paul is the only supporter of Joe. Ryga reflects the life of native Canadian. He begun with a pessimistic thought and end up by destruction. Not only their thoughts got destructed due to marginality but also their life which aches to deserve a peace in it. Only after the death, many people realize originally that they are in the state of dilemma. As a women Rita was not able to answer for many questions which magistrate arise.

Magistrate: Answer me! Drunkenness! Shoplifting! Assault! Prostitution, Prostitution, Prostitution! (page number 63)

Life of Rita is shown as a showcase object. We can feel it how much she suffered through double marginalization. Her acceptance of life as a native Indian is optimistic but ends up in destruction. Through the example of Ryga's play, women's marginality is viewed clearly.

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