



DEMARCATON OF INDIVIDUALITY, SOCIAL AND RACIAL ENCOUNTERS IN GEORGE RYGA'S *INDIAN*

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Abstract

The research article scrutinizes the themes like, identity crisis, cultural and racial discriminations. It discourses the issues of Canadian identity. Ryga has been able to grasp a permanent position in the larger, ongoing construction of post-colonial Canadian culture. The main anxiety of his plays is to emphasis on the struggle and anguish of the ordinary, working-class people. It deliberates several cultural encounters which the characters are supposed to face throughout their lives. The drama also explores the deficiency and misery of the "Indian," who is consecutively named but finally remains anonymous. Ryga establishes in this drama that the Indians' quandary as a result of social separation is much inferior than death itself. The exertion of cultural construction within the colonial set-up is reddened by the detestation shown by the white society which emerges into racial struggle. The play *Indian* alarms itself with the idea of cultural encounter in terms of civilization, hybridity, estrangement, marginalization and dislocation. The characters encounter cultural variances between the labourers and the employers, the ordinary people and the government agencies. From the concept of 'no', Indian increases his voice against those who have not given him the right to prerogative his identity as 'I'.

Keywords: Racial encounter, Identity Crisis, Alienation, Colonizer, Culture, Labourers

George Ryga is one of Canada's outstanding dramatists. He was a creative writer in 1960s and he has written more than twenty plays, most of which are published in an anthology called "George Ryga: The Other Plays". This anthology comprises of sixteen plays by Ryga. Most of the plays of the anthology deliberate the themes of human struggle, cultural differences, racial discrimination and other important themes. These plays also discourse the issues of Canadian identity. Ryga has been able to grasp a permanent position in the larger, ongoing construction of post-colonial Canadian culture. The main anxiety of his plays is to

emphasis on the struggle and anguish of the ordinary, working-class people.

George Ryga, despite being non-native, has dexterously shown the quandaries of the native Indians in Canada in his play *Indian*. This play concentrations upon the scuffle between the laborers and the white employer, the suffering of the working-class people and their confrontation. It also deliberates several cultural encounters the characters are to face throughout their lives. The racial encounters also take a noteworthy interplanetary in the play. While speaking about the themes his plays deal with, Hoffman comments that

his plays deal with "a romantic attraction to the land and the people who live close to it and a profound alienation from that same land- the ownership of which is often in question." (21) In *Indian*, Ryga has placed forth the protagonist Indian's inner battle between the culture of the white society and his own. The white society enforces their own culture upon the colonized people. They need them to shadow the culture of the colonizer. Hoffman shares his views and his association with ordinary people:

Ryga's deep association with ordinary people, especially in their struggle to surmount colonial, racist, and classicist barriers to the fruitful and productive exercise of their work, such as they continue to exist in western Canada, gives his work an explicit political underpinning (21).

Indian undoubtedly addresses problems such as, crisis of identity and remoteness in their own territory. The drama is documented for representing the situation of Canada's First Nations people in an accurate manner. The story's plot concentrations on Ryga's personal experience recovering from influenza by working on his father's Alberta farm with Cree Indians. In his plays, he has excellently portrayed the residents' poor living conditions. In this drama, he emphasizes on how the local people agonized both mentally and physically as a result of the white masters' discernment, marginalization, and unfriendliness in the capitals. The drama also explores the deficiency and misery of the "Indian," who is consecutively named but finally remains anonymous. Ryga establishes in this drama that the Indians' quandary as a result of social separation is much inferior than death itself. George Ryga makes society to comprehend the intense of inequality done to the indigenous on Canada's reserves through the genuine staging of their suffering in this play.

In 1961, television disseminated the play *Indian*. Three important characters appear in the drama. Indian is a protuberant character whose given name is not stated by the author in order to accentuate the problem of identity struggle and generate the character more global. He works for

his boss Watson as a provisional labourer. He also been seen wearisome skintight jeans and worn-in cowboy boots. He also sporting a broad-brimmed black western hat. Watson, a farmer and the Indian's boss and Agent, a civil servant, is another eminent character in the play. He is a field worker for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and supervising the Indians. Robert G. Dunn states that,

Reflective of identity crisis is a widespread reckoning with the historically subjugated identities of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other subordinated social categories and groupings (4).

In order to brand the character Agent more pervasive, George Ryga tenaciously gave it no name for him. Agent is a white settler who has ill-treated and relegated Canada's First Nations people. Indian is latent with a tiny lump of the soil behind his neck as a pillow while the screen is raised. He is wearisome a hat over his face and fronting the sun. Watson, Indian's boss, has assigned the task of establishing fence poles. He yells aggressively at Indian when he notices that he is still sleeping in the morning without carrying out his task. As he lies down, Indian informs Watson that he is in anguish from a headache and desires that Watson exhortation from shouting.

The play *Indian* alarms itself with the idea of cultural encounter in terms of civilization, hybridity, estrangement, marginalization and dislocation. The characters encounter cultural variances between the labourers and the employers, the ordinary people and the government agencies. Here in *Indian*, Ryga efforts to lure the consideration of the audience towards his own experience and also, he comments what he thought in a marginalized society of the native Indians. Racially discriminated and culturally alienated Indian struggles against the reigning government of the white class. His confrontation is not of wild, rather passive. Indian's investigations about Agent's job salary and being uncomfortable, the latter he asks Indian to be quiet. But Indian expresses his resistance:

You wanna hit me? Come on ... hit me! You kill me easy, and they arrest you. Same

people who give your car. Hit me-even little bit- come on! You coward! Just hit me like this! (Slaps his palms together) ... Just like that- come on! You Know what I do when you hit me? (29)

Indian attentions upon the predicament of the native Indian laborers. They are target to the colonizers who feats them culturally, socially, frugally, politically, and, also psychologically. The cultural pretension which dichotomizes the people into two cultural transformations and disturbs the sound sense of a person as is seen in Watson's activities when he mops the kid inside and asked the Indian to complete the task which is given to him. Watson threatens Indian: "I got your Kid in the grainery, locked up so he'll keep. You try to run off after your palms, and I'm gonna take my and shoot a hole that big through the kid's head" (26).

Indians are clearly isolated in their own land by European masters in this scene. George Ryga added asserts that the White Masters have engaged everything from the aboriginal people, including their property, territory, culture, language, and even their names. As a result, Ryga has drawn international attention to a number of issues confronting indigenous peoples, particularly the loss of identity. He has excellently offered the awful life situation of aboriginal in Canada through the characterization of Indian.

Cultural encounter strains the perception of othernesses, an important postmodern facet. Understanding cross-cultural illustration requires not only a self-reflexive and historical consciousness of academic modes of production but also a scrutiny of the ways in which 'others' have themselves translated and undermined. Watson charges Indian to work consciously. He also communicates him not to waste any more time. Indian appries him that he is drinking Indian whiskey. Watson becomes disorganized on hearing the kind of Indian whiskey and he asks Indian about the Indian whiskey. It becomes vibrant that Watson has never heard of this whiskey before. This whiskey is made "only for Indian". Here, Indian is framed as 'other' in drinking too. Indian says, "Indian whiskey ... That's the kind

of whiskey they make for Indian." (27)

The culturally as well as racially side-lined people are well-defined by the alteration which is marked by race and gender. The foremost group or the persecutor class feats the marginalized people by virtue of the variance in race or culture. They are raided of their cultural heritage, social status, and are led to racial desolation. Indian is labelled as "drunken, undependable and lazy" – the white society use for the Indian. Watson is more harmful with Indian. The Agent is a white liberal who finds his morals battered by Indian's mercy killing of his brother. In the beginning, Indian seems to be a racist truism. But, later on, his character is exposed. He grieves from racial desolation. He does not find anyone to listen and support him.

One's cultural identity is predictable by demonstrating one's ethnic group. The exertion of cultural construction within the colonial set-up is reddened by the detestation shown by the white society which develops into racial struggle. The native Indians are not supposed to use boots as they are ethnic minorities, henceforth they should not dare to defy the colonizers' orders. Indian in *Indian* feels the consequences of cultural and racial discrimination he encounters. He sees his existence as 'nobody'. From the concept of 'no', Indian increases his voice against those who have not given him the right to prerogative his identity as 'I'.

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