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A Critical Study on the Contrast Images of Métis Women in Beatrice Mosioneier's in Search of April Raintree

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Abstract: ***The most important themes of Canadian literature are interrelated with searching for their own identity and their existence. Métis is a French term that means 'Mixed –Blood', the Métis people in Canada and the United States have adopted some of their Indigenous and European cultures while creating their customs and tradition as well as in developing their common language. They are an unmistakable ethnic Indigenous people groups whose history, family, cultural expression is emerged from out of the First Nation, French and English hide trade but they have acquired an abundance of both European and Indigenous literary works. This paper mainly focuses on the sufferings of Métis children and the survival of half Métis women and half-white women; it also considers how the women are suffering for their identity to live in the society.***

Keywords: Canadian Literature, Identity, Métis Women, Half-White Women, Beatrice Mosionier.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian historians reflect the humanity, failures as well as successes, despair as well as hopes, deaths as well as endurance on their terms, rather than inside the framework of a binary; they represent humans' flaws and their enormous potential. The Métis are a unique ethnic Indigenous people whose history, ancestry, and intercultural expression arose from the First Nations, French, and English traders, and who have inherited a variety of European and Indigenous literature. Métis' writing is a recollection of scattered elements, both personal and communal, and while it initially consultations and repositions itself at the metaphorical imperial centre, it swiftly repositions itself by downgrading the "territory".
The First Nations, Inuit and Métis are the three distinct groupings of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, sometimes they are known as Indigenous peoples. Even though they are frequently

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grouped by history, culture, and viewpoints. The Métis are a mixed-culture people who have descended through a long history of Indigenous peoples and European settlers interacting and having children.

The issue of the Métis is like the suffering of the Indians, which are colonization and eventual helplessness, psychological, still, fight between an appealed violence versus civilization. Métis or half-breeds are still used as vehicles in modern works to express the authors' views. The figures are frequently depicted in rudeness, misery, and sexual promiscuousness, apparently to represent the Indian's cultural and current death.

In higher education, the living history of mixed ancestry and family background is sometimes ignored. Across all levels of schooling, dominant narratives pervade the curriculum, further disadvantaging Métis people's stories. Racism and prejudice are common among the native Canadians, and labelling people negatively have a long-term harmful impact on those who are the focus of prejudice.

The Métis writers focus is on their Métis Nation of Western Canada and search for their identity and also, they try to find out a solution for their struggles. The well-known Métis writer is Maria Cambell who is an inspiration to the contemporary indigenous Canadian writers. Cambell's *Halfbreed* reveals the brutal realities of the existence of native women in Canada; she expresses the various stages of her life and explains the struggles she has faced as a single mother. Another prominent Métis writer is Beatrice Mosionier who has no thought of being a writer but her loss of two sisters made her a writer after recognizing the reasons her sisters ended their life, the family's neediness, liquor addiction and racism.

Beatrice Culleton Mosionier is known for her novel, *In Search of April Raintree* which is her first novel and it is published in 1983. The story is about the two victims of a particular group of people; the victims are April Raintree and her sister Chery who are faced many troubles only because they are Métis women; the Métis people are not accepted by white. Métis are mixed blood of Canadian people who are never recognized by the white pigmentation people; the issues begin three hundred years earlier but still, now the issues are existing in the world.

The paper considers how the two sisters suffer for their identity to live in society, because of their contrasting thought about their life. People must respect their own culture and if the culture is awful, they must try to change it to lead it to a better society. The Métis people are affected by Euro- Canadian's authority, racism and control on economic, cultural, political and social life which cause other people to see them with negative perceptions. Some people like Cheryl accepts what they are and live without having any thought of their evil situations but some people like April wants to change their lifestyle and also their identity from their native culture only for selfish thought; she gives value to her life and loves herself only because of her white colour.

The protagonist of the novel is April Raintree who narrates her family's mournful story throughout the novel. At first, April narrates the sufferings of their earlier childhood life and then their terrible experience of being Métis. Their mother is a red Indian native American who has lived in Canada and her father is coming to the place for doing trade either from France or Britain, so they have mixed blood.

April tells the story when she is twenty-four years old, she says that in their early childhood stage, she and her sister are taken away by different foster parents that mean they are not brought up by their parents but adopted by another family so they are lived in separate places but they contact each other. April tells as Cheryl feels proud for being Métis and thinks as it helps her to develop a strong and confident identity: but in the opposite, April thinks her

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identity as a Métis gives more abuse sufferings and discrimination which makes her feel too shame of being Métis so she wants to be like a white because she has fair skin as the white and in most of the places she has recognized as a white person but Cheryl has dark pigmentation but she does not feel ashamed for a Métis woman. For her wish, April has married the lawyer Bob Radcliff who is a white man; she suffers a lot due to the discriminating behaviour of her white mother-in-law and the illegal affair of her husband then she has confessed that she is not fit into the white society.

Cheryl lives happily in the foster parents as a Métis child; the immense love, care, freedom, culture and the community of the foster parents give benefit to her so she enjoys her life. Her foster mother is her school teacher Mrs MacAdams who is also a Métis woman, she encourages Cheryl to embrace the culture proudly. While growing up in the Métis foster family, Cheryl develops herself as a confident, good spirit person and enjoying life. she loves her racism and accepts her native customs and she gives importance and look after her self-worth, self-confidence and accept herself as a Métis without any feeling of the worse of the future.

Cheryl has met the disaster of her life when she leaves the foster family and loses the foster parents and her sister April which let her suffer by racism. At university, she is emotionally attacked by the domination of colonialism so she has started to hate the white tradition of her sister as well as she loses hope and confidence. The darkness, anger, violent behaviour, poverty, domestic abuse turns her life into a tragic one then she has started to addicted to alcohol and become a prostitute.

Cheryl feels secure in the foster family where she has got mere bookish knowledge which is written by white people, so she does not know the outer world and her real culture so she could not able to endure the oppression of the white people at her school and university that make her as a rude person and hatred of herself. When she finds out, her mother is also addicted to alcohol and became a prostitute she feels ashamed and commits suicide. she does not know how to get rid of it and how to manage the oppression.

April has a false impression about her native girls, she thought that all her native women are addicted to alcohol and without feeling ashamed they have become prostitutes and out of the discipline of the society and also without any hesitation say lies so she feels as being a Métis. She thinks being half- breed means being unfortunate and polluted and also having a drink means pathetic. She has thought that the half-white means being awful and stupid so she decides to be away from her native people and free from the illegal activities and when he has been adopted by the white person she feels like a white girl. Cheryl is entirely different from the opinion of April; she feels pride for being a Métis and like to accept her native customs without any hesitations and be truthful and faithfulness to her native tradition

April gives more importance to self-worth and wants to become a white person which led her to move from her own identity. She has not to care about what others are thought about it; her only thought is to live the life she likes. When she has realized that the real characteristics of the white people which is even the Métis are in white pigmentation, the real white people could not treat the Métis equal and could not value their thought and life.

Beatrice Mosionier writes about the distress associated with her experiencing racism. She maintains that some native people are trying to escape from negative images of the people through consuming alcohol, denying their ancestry and entrap in internalized. “Some of us drink. Some of us deny our heritage. Some of us merely exist from today, with no ambitions and no dreams” (In Search of April Raintree, 50). As Cheryl in this work, In April Raintree

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Alice and Henry Raintree use alcohol to escape the pains of internalized racism and internalized oppression; they drink alcohol to escape from the pains of dislocation, cultural loss, illness, marginalization, alienation, unemployment, and poverty.

Cheryl drinks heavily throughout the racial drama, but she has never been able to relieve the pain of internalized inferiority and racist self-meanings. Suffering as a result of her inability Cheryl kills herself to enter a condition of sadness. She makes a decision that is primarily influenced by her surroundings. The dreadful reality of her ancestry is influenced but she overcomes it. Through the sisters, the readers understand the power of love and how it can lead to self-love and personal growth; the sisters' longing for true love and identity which let them suffer at first, but which increases their self-love and growth.

Every work of current Aboriginal literature in Canada has a political message; most of the books correct representative literature's incorrect portrayals of Indigenous people and seeks peace and reward through writing. In terms of themes, the more recent these writings are, the less harshly they criticize past wrongdoings. Instead of blaming non-Natives for the Natives' woes, these books actively seek to heal them.

Margaret Laurence's characters release authenticity and the Métis women characters are credible from a White perspective. Even in Laurence's works, though the Métis are missing, they are still portrayed as dying valiantly; and they are still portrayed as the more passionate, sensual, and uncontrolled people in contrast to White society's puritanical restrictions. She is the only author whose Métis characters seem realistic and human.

Fear arises as a result of the expanding Indigenous diasporas, and there are determined efforts in North America to reconstitute cleansed identities and avoid hybridity. As a result, for some people, being a Métis meant receiving treatment that is even worse than what the First Nations have approved. April and Cheryl's parents, emerge as the first cultural influences for them. However, due to their parents' alcoholism, the Raintree children are soon separated and placed in separate foster homes, where their socialization begins.

When a result of being socialized and acculturated into a Euro-Canadian society, many adoptees struggled with cultural and identity conflict as they entered adulthood. Because of the duality of their reunion experience, identity difficulties may have been much more challenging for transracial adoptees.

April's fight against racism is intertwined with her desire to appear white to portray a favourable stereotype of the colonizer. She believes it is critical since Métis are treated even worse than First Nations peoples because Euro-Canadians are afraid of miscegenation. This dread is the fear of eroding the limit between self and others. April is taught how to be a nice White girl, how to pray in French, and how to please her foster parents. After a few years, April has transferred to the money-hungry DeRosier household, where she receives a very different treatment. Many Indigenous foster children would identify April's portrayal of life there. "Native girl syndrome" has been diagnosed among Native youngsters in several foster families.

Cheryl finds out the reason they are being adopted by different parents; the reason is her parents are addicted to alcoholism which let her mother feels depressed and guilty so she has committed suicide. This news destroys Cheryl's self-identity and triggers her fate and her disappointment let her feel shame and become an alcoholic and then she became a prostitute. One time three men thought of April as Cheryl mistakenly so they raped April but she has come out from the trauma but Cheryl is not able to bear it so she thought that the only way of coming out from the mental pain is committing suicide as her mother. April knows

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everything about Cheryl through her son then she decides to take care of Cheryl's son and then finally she accepts her native ancestry which he thought and feel proud for being a Métis that increase her self-confidence.

Cheryl is rooted in the past, while April nurtures a delusion in her whiteness. Cheryl's romanticized view of her heroic people is wrecked as she discovers her still drunken father, and she is unable to accept reality. Self-fulfilling prophecies about Aboriginal people, such as being alcoholics, can lead to intrapersonal expectations. Cheryl, on the other hand, falls into a deep depression and becomes a prostitute. She appears to be unable to overcome the native girl syndrome. Cheryl's identity is based on the unstable foundation she developed as a child from the novels she read. When she is a young lady, reality affects her, her identity cracks, and like her mother, she commits suicide.

Both sisters have different opinions about their life, they are influenced by the surrounding people and they are trying to find out their own identity still their end of the life, but they cannot find out their identity and happiness. So, they suffer a lot, but when people give more importance to humanism without being influenced by any kind of issues like racism, they live a better and pleasant life.

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