

## The Stereotypical Images of Marginalized Women in the Poetry of Rita Dove

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**Abstract :** This paper attempts to shed light upon the stereotypical images of marginalized black women as shown through the poetry of Rita Dove. Meanwhile, it explores how stereotypical images held by the society and public perceptions perpetuate the marginalization of black women. Dove is considered one of the most fundamental African-American poets who devoted her writings to explore the problem of identity that confronted marginalized women in America. Besides tackling the issue of black women's stereotypical images, this paper focuses upon the psychological damage which the black women had suffered from due to their stripped identity. In 'Thomas and Beulah', Dove reflects the black woman's longing for her homeland in order to make up for her lost identity. This poem represents atavistic feelings deal with certain recurrent images, both aural and visual, like the image of Beulah who represents the African-American woman who searches for an identity, as she is being denied and humiliated one in the newly founded society. In an attempt to protest against the stereotypical mule image that had been imposed upon black women in America, Dove in 'On the Bus with Rosa Parks' tries to ignite the beaten spirits to struggle for their own rights by revitalizing the rebellious nature and strong determination of the historical figure 'Rosa Parks' that sparked the Civil Rights Movement. In 'Daystar', Dove proves that black women are subjected to double-edged oppression; firstly, in terms of race as a black woman in an unjust white society that violates her rights due to her black origins and secondly, in terms of gender as a member of the female sex that is meant to exist only to serve man's needs. Similarly, in the 'Adolescence' series, Dove focuses on the double marginalization which the black women had experienced. It concludes that the marginalization of black women has resulted from the domination of the masculine world and the oppression of the white world. Moreover, Dove's 'Beauty and the Beast' investigates the African-American women's problem of estrangement and identity crisis in America. It also sheds light upon the psychological consequences that resulted from the violation of marginalized women's identity. Furthermore, this poem shows the black women's self-debasement, helplessness, and double consciousness that emanate from the sense of uprootedness. Finally, this paper finds out that the negative, debased and inferior stereotypical image held by the society did not only contribute to the marginalization of black women but also silenced and muted their voices.

**Keywords :** stereotypical images, marginalized women, Rita Dove, identity

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