



Mahashweta Devi's Expression of The Oppressed: Character Portrayals in Her Works

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ABSTRACT

The study includes a thorough examination of feminism's characteristics using Draupadi and the Breast Giver by Mahashweta Devi. The primary subject of the paper is Mahashweta Devi's Draupadi from a feminist standpoint. Mahashweta Devi is regarded as a famous feminist critic and writer who gives the oppressed and unheard a platform. Her depictions of women in her paintings capture the myriad complexity that women from diverse sociocultural origins experience. With the release of her works, Mahashweta Devi rose to prominence as a feminist author after writing the book *Breast Stories*. Mahashweta Devi's first work was published in Bengali. A renowned feminist and critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak translated it. It contains stories such as Draupadi, Behind the Bodice, and Breast Giver. Dopdi Mejhen, a tribal woman who battled against oppression, is portrayed in the novel as a symbol of resistance against patriarchal cruelty by Draupadi. Devi also depicts women's struggles and the exploitation of women's bodies in the story *Breast Giver*. Mahashweta Devi made a lasting impact on literacy as well as the social and cultural society with her writings. Her writings, which mostly target underprivileged and tribal groups, have had a significant influence on women's culture.

KEYWORDS: Patriarchal, Exploitation, Underprivileged, Supremacy, Feminism

INTRODUCTION:

A variety of socioeconomic and political elements that contribute to gender equality are recognized by feminism. In the patriarchal or modern world, People suppress the feminine members while harboring biases against the masculine members. Therefore, feminism opposes stereotypes and promotes equality for both sexes by outlawing all forms of violence against women. In a patriarchal culture that values male viewpoints, feminism works to advance justice for women. There is a misconception that feminism is anti-men and just supports women's rights and supremacy. However, feminism has created a number of theories that address different gender difficulties, regardless of a person's sex. According to Mahasweta Devi, feminism tackles the challenges that women, particularly those from marginalized and oppressed communities, encounter. She focuses on caste and class stereotypes in addition to gender issues. Through her compelling themes of inquiry and resistance, her works and stories subvert the conventions of patriarchal society. The literary works of Mahashweta Devi go into issues of justice, injustice, and feminism. Devi advocated for low-caste and tribal women's rights, bringing social change. Generations of men and women, authors, activists, and academics were all influenced by her. The feminist analysis of some of Mahashweta Devi's fiction that emphasizes defiance of patriarchal structures is the main topic of this work. This research paper, which is a feminist literary analysis of the story Draupadi and Breast Giver, was written using a variety of approaches. The characters of Dopdi and Jashoda are portrayed with great impact. Mahashweta Devi highlights how women's bodies are being used as a place of control and subjected to harassment and exploitation. Other academics who have studied Devi's writings, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, have focused on gender, caste, and class, which has advanced feminist scholarship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A modest attempt to objectively examine Mahasweta Devi's extensive literary works that reveal the socio-political and cultural elements that shape the lives of oppressed people is Pallavi Mishra's *Literary Canvas: A Critical Reading*. Through her words, the author demystifies the alleged grandeur of the past while also giving voice to the silent discord and dismantling the underlying systems. Through Mahasweta Devi's words, the book attempts to highlight the protest and struggle that the oppressed have endured and documented throughout the country's historical history. The author is a conscientious voice for women because her writings about women take up more area on her canvas. Community and the Myth & History chapters celebrate the community's competing traditions while illustrating how organic relationships shape themselves on an otherwise uneven surface. With appropriate attention to the ideas of History, Nation, Gender, Myth, and Race that serve as the cornerstones of postcolonial thinking, the texts have been interpreted within the framework of postcolonial theory. It is hoped that the book would be well received by students, educators, and researchers who want to examine Mahasweta Devi as a significant post-colonial author.

METHODOLOGY

The writings will be methodically examined using qualitative research techniques including content analysis and discourse analysis, taking into account their sociopolitical and geographic contexts. To further enhance comprehension of Devi's distinctive contributions to Indian writing in English, a comparison analysis of other works tackling related subjects will be included for the discussion of various characters of women in the society.

DISCUSSION

Powerful characters of Dopdi and Jashoda

The main character of the narrative is Dopdi Mejhen, a member of the tribal community and a Naxalite. She fights for the injustice done to her and opposes her arrest. Not only is Dopdi being humiliated, but the ruling class is also suppressing and dehumanizing every other low-caste and underprivileged minority. In the narrative, Dopdi can be viewed as their spokesperson. Dopdi's vulnerability is further increased by the fact that she is a woman.

This demonstrates how society's mentality hasn't changed since the Mahabharata's time. Devi attempts to compare Dopdi and the Draupadi from the Mahabharata, who both experience discrimination from those in positions of authority, in this story. In her piece *Draupadi: Revisiting the Past via the Lens of the Gendered Subaltern*, Shangsita Goswami writes "In her writings, class and gender repressions are combined, and female characters like Draupadi emerge as powerful voices of opposition to that." (Goswami 124). This exemplifies the different levels of humiliation and oppression that are present in patriarchal culture. As a tribal lady, Dopdi is a member of the underprivileged group and is chastised and ignored by the dominants, but she will not be silenced. She claims that the other members find strength in her inability to speak.

In the Mahabharata, *Draupadi*, the Pandava's wife, was assaulted by the Kauravas when they stripped her naked in public. Due to her marriage to the five Pandavas, Draupadi in the epic suffers from polyandry and becomes a victim of patriarchal politics. Similar opinions are expressed by Gayatri Spivak in her critical essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, which explores the ways in which dominant people repress women or oppressed groups.

Likewise, in the narrative *The Senanayak* threatened to disrobe Dopdi in the same manner that Kaurav had done after Mahasweta Devi. As a result, the incident where Dopdi was viciously raped by the Senanayak men occurs again. In the Mahabharata, Draupadi upholds her dignity by demanding justice despite her pain. Similar to this, Dopdi bravely defends herself in Devi's work, defying all social expectations and refusing to feel guilty about her nudity. In their piece *From Dopdi to Draupadi, from Oppression to Empowerment*, Somjeeta Pandey and Bidhu Chand Murmu write: Reading "Draupadi" by Mahasweta Devi Another Draupadi appears many years after the writing of the Mahabharata. Despite not being a member of the royal family or having a polygamous marriage, Draupadi is exploited in Devi's tale. In Devi's narrative, Dopdi is a tribal woman who opposes the violence of the ruling men. The person who raped and assaulted her won't dress her. Consequently, it represents opposition to injustices based on gender and class.

In her article, Anita Goswami offers the following viewpoint: *Revival of Subaltern History: "Draupadi" by Mahasweta Devi: A Study of Mythology in Translation* She redefines the patriarchal nationalist concept of a woman's sexual honor because she is too self-respecting to allow the patriarchal standards of morality to dominate her. She disobeys the nation-state's authority, which uses its agents to spread terror and bloodshed. (Goswami 116).

Even after her spouse Dhulna Mejhen passed away, Dopdi remained resilient and battled to dismantle patriarchal conventions and bring about revolutionary social change. According to her, women in her era were recognized by their husbands' names, which reflected traditional gender norms. However, Dopdi, a strong and visionary woman, challenges the notion that women's identity is determined by male relationships. Instead of grieving, Dopdi decides to stand up to the repression and become an inspiration to others. Dopdi asks in a

similar situation, "What will they do if they catch me? They are going to "counter" me. Allow them to If suffering causes the body and mind to fail,

Dopdi is going to sever her tongue. In spite of adverse conditions, this illustrates Draupadi's (Dopdi) tenacity and willpower. Despite being aware of Senanayak and his men's threats, Dopdi refuses to endure the torture, including the psychological and bodily harm. Her ability to manage her own body is demonstrated by her decision to bite off her tongue during the extreme pressure of confession. After Draupadi has been humiliated, Lord Krishna, who is a representation of God, comes to her aid in the Mahabharata tale, yet there is no God to save her.

There are some differences between the two stories, despite the fact that the concept of exacting retribution is present in both. The thirst for revenge held by Draupadi was one of the driving forces behind the Mahabharata war. Instead of pursuing revenge for the humiliation she endured, Mahasweta Devi's character in Dopdi decides to take revenge on her own terms. She tries to get revenge on the people who have wronged her. She appears to be a female of a new species.

The epithet Dopdi originates from the fact that the word Draupadi is really pronounced differently in some rural or tribal areas emerged. There is a degree of commonality between Dopdi in Mahasweta Devi and Draupadi in the Mahabharata, despite their extreme differences, in that they both seek to combat the injustice that has been done to them in their own special ways. Despite only being married to one, Draupadi has five husbands, making her a queen, regal, and beautiful woman. Conversely, Dopdi is a poor tribal woman who has endured cruel treatment throughout her life at the hands of the community's feudalistic rulers.

In the story 'Breast Giver' Similarly, the Breast donor, a woman named Jashoda was occupied with providing for her family by working as a breast donor and supplying her milk to children from other households. It's important because, like Jashoda did to the children of the Haldar family, Krishna was constantly pampered by Jashoda, who wasn't his biological mother. In the narrative, the Haldar family takes advantage of breast-giver Jashoda instead of thanking her for all of her efforts. Jashoda develops breast cancer later in life as a result of losing control over her body as a subaltern lady. The story emphasizes intersectionality by showing how Jashoda is exploited due to her caste, class, and gender. According to the tale, a Brahmin lady shouldn't be required to perform this type of labor. Because she is economically marginalized and must work as a wet nurse to support her family, Jashoda, a Brahmin, endures humiliation. A similar viewpoint is expressed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who calls it "cover for the brutalizing of the Brahmin." Because of her strong maternal identity and her decision to provide food for the defenseless children, Jashoda is known as "the mother of the earth." The narrative highlights how women's bodies are portrayed as expendable. When Jashoda nurtures other people's children, her body betrays her by developing breast cancer. When she became ill, the people who had previously relied on her to provide for and care for their children turned their backs on her.

"I've given milk to so many, but no one will give me a drop now that I'm old and dried up," Jashoda said.

This demonstrates how women are viewed as disposable in a patriarchal society dominated by men.

CONCLUSION

The study examined several facets of the oppression and humiliation that women and the marginalized population experience. Concern over the repression of gender, class, and caste in patriarchal society is explored in Mahasweta Devi's works such as Draupadi and Breast Giver. Through Dopdi and Jashoda's subjugation of marginalized groups like tribals and untouchables, her paintings illustrate feminism. They turn into tools of resistance, enhancing the voices of underrepresented women such as Jashoda and Dopdi. These ladies refuse to be silenced in the face of severe discrimination against them on the basis of their gender, caste, and class. Devi uses the characters and compelling narration to portray hope in both active and passive opposition. She makes people aware of how important inclusion is in the modern society. Her tales force readers to face the unsettling realities of Indian society while presenting hardships and injustice in a genuine and unvarnished manner, hence introducing activism in Indian literature. This implies that having the guts to stand out and demand dignity is where true power resides.

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