

MAHASWETA DEVI'S "DRAUPADI" AND THE MYTHIC METHOD: A CONTRAPUNTAL READING

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Keyword: Mahasweta Devi; Draupadi; Mahabharata; Rape; Woman

This paper is a study of Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi" from mythic method point of view and it is also an attempt of contrapuntal reading of the text. The very name Draupadi is similar to the name of the epic character Draupadi in "The Mahabharata. Apparently this text focuses on the Naxalbari Movement but on deeper level, it engages with multiple dimensions. In this paper, I would argue that this text is not merely situated in the territory of contemporary context rather it is deterritorialized and reterritorialized in various grounds. The story of the tribal woman reminds us the past story of elite Draupadi of the disrobing, of suffering, of women as marginalized entities in society. But beyond these similarities, there are enough ground of departure. The epical Draupadi god divine blessing to protect herself but Dopdi has the divine quality within herself. Dopdi's sexual harassment has come out as the voice of protest in a unique way. Mahasweta Devi's text questions the 'singularity' of Draupadi in the epic. Mahasweta Devi has deconstructed the hypothesis of the epic ages by asserting the empowered subjectivity of the tribal woman.

The story is named after the heroine Draupadi of "The Mahabharata" Draupadi is the name of the central character. She is introduced to the reader between two uniforms and two versions of her name; Dopdi and Draupadi. It is either that as a tribal she can't pronounce her own Sanskrit name or the tribalized form, Dopdi, is the proper name of the ancient Draupadi. The name is used in homonymic sense. The word Dopdi is derived from Draupadi, the inscription of the elite name. The interplay of homonymic, similarity and dissimilarity, convergence and divergence, parallelism and departures create a double bind situation. Individual are caught in double bind situation. Dopdi is not exception to it.

The story of 'Draupadi' reminds us the story of epical Draupadi in "The Mahabharata". The story talks about the another Kurukshetra, in which Dopdi Meihen took the role of a vangardist.

Mahasweta Devi rewrote the story of Dopdi to reanimate the obscure territory of the lives of the subaltern. Only when we read through the mythic method point of view, only when we read the text contrapuntally then we understand the problems of women who are treated as marginalised entities in society. In "The Mahabharata" Draupadi was buttered of in the game of dice for being a woman. So, she is subalternised gender wisely. She is married to the five sons of the impotent Pandu. Within a patriarchal and patronymic context, she is exceptional, indeed 'singular' in the sense of odd, unpaired, uncoupled. Her husband, since they are husband rather than lovers, are legitimately pluralized. When she is disrobing, she silently prays to the incarnate Krishna to save her. The idea of sustaining law materializes itself as clothing and Draupadi is infinitely clothes and can not be publicly stripped. She got the divine blessing. But if we juxtapose the character Dopdi and epic character Draupadi side by side we find there are many similarities between them, but at the same time there are enough ground of departure. Mahasweta Devi departs as we find that in the epic Draupadi legitimized pluralization as a wife among husband in singularity is used to demonstrate the glory. She questions the singularity by placing Dopdi first in a comradeship, activist monogamous marriage and then in a situation of multiple rape. She has the divine blessing within herself. And this content, I take is provided by none but Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak from the source Critical Inquiry, vol.8, No 2, Writing and Sexual Difference (Winter 1981), PP38-402, published by The University of Chicago Press.

In this paper I want to argue by using mythic method that degradation was in the past and is in the present, but subjectivity and agency are more empowered. Unlike Draupadi, dopdi uses her feminine nakedness as a weapon against her enemy. She unveils herself to turn the violence that she endured, upon the man responsible for the violence against her. Dopdi's reaction to her

rape is completely contradictory to societies view of rape. Instead of letting this abhorrent rape, she is empowered by the rape. The disrobing of garments stimulates powerful male reaction. Dopdi forces reaction out of Senanayak by using her body as a weapon. Disrobing her garments is most importantly a symbol of her remarkable survival. Rape can make a woman as it did Dopdi. Rape is commonly viewed by society as a symbol of female degradation, female submission and the stripping of honour and humanity. In the stories of Devi, Draupadi, a tribal rebel is raped by authorities of state, the portrayal of rape and the reaction of the young women is exceedingly different. In Draupadi the unveiling of garments reveals immense female power and it symbolizes the remarkable survival of these battered and abused women. The circumstances and personalities of the rape victims are very different in Dopdi and Draupadi in The Mahabharata.

This paper also argues that Mahasweta Devi in "Draupadi" has deconstructed the hypothesis of the epic ages. "The Ramayana" and "The Mahabharata" are the foundational texts which provide moral values. We have derived the value system from epic ages. And I would also argue that usually by using mythic method the writer shows the glorification of the past and degradation of the present. Joyce's "Ulysses" and T.S.Eliot's "The WasteLand" are the example of this and from which the departure begins as in "Draupadi", by using mythic method Mahasweta Devi shows that degradation was in the past, and also remain in the present. This argument only we find, if we read the text from mythic method point of view and contrapuntally. The Contrapuntal reading is coined by Edward Said, the post colonial critic who defines by saying that there is a reference of both the process of imperialism and the resistance of it.

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