

SUBALTERN ISSUES IN SELECTED SHORT STORIES OF MAHASHWETA DEVI

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Abstract:

The assertion long thought that only a Dalit can present a Dalit's perception on the problems troubling the Dalit community, over which most of the early Dalit literature was judged and confirmed was proved wrong by writers like Rabindarnath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Mahashweta Devi, Vijay Tendulkar, Arundati Suzzane Roy, Girish Karnad etc. these Non-Dalit writers succeeded through their literature in depicting a pragmatic picture of Dalit life which even the Dalit writers highly praised. Among all the non Dalit writers stated, Mahashweta Devi stands out due to her ability in capturing the true spirit of Dalit experience.

Keywords: *Subaltern, feminist, gender, Dalit, exploitation.*

Since the early 1980s the notion of “gender” has been used in feminist theory to denote to the social creation of the differences between men and women. Joan Scott describes the notion of gender as “a way of referring to the solely social beginning of the prejudiced identities of men and women. Gender is, in this explanation, a social class imposed on a sexed body”. Here “gender” as a representative construct is used in dissimilarity with the idea of “sex” which refers to their biological dissimilarity. Gender studies thus centres on the discursive structures of human facts as well as social practices and institutions that decide the ways in which men and women are apparent differently and unevenly. It also questions these practices and structures that have kept women in a submissive position vis-à-vis men, and deprived of her equal rights as a political and social being throughout history.

At present gender studies has begun to observe that some of the basic postulations of western feminism has tended to universalize and essentialism the category of “woman” by presumptuous that the white woman's knowledge stood for the experience of all women. Taking into deliberation the inputs from women all over the world- the coloured women of Europe and America, the inhabitant women of Latin America, Africa, Asia and other parts of the world- gender studies has turn out to be more aware of the junctions of the constructions of gender with that of class and race. In India too, gender studies is becoming more responsive to the need to address the query of gender with a cross-cultural perception, given the variety of India's socio-cultural fabric.

It is ever more being recognized that women's studies in India should not incomprehensible the heterogeneity of the group of 'woman', “whose points and activities have diverse in relation to the varied intersections of caste, class, religion, region, age, kinship, and so on. Postcolonial feminists like Gayatri Spivak, Kumkum Sangari, Susie Tharu, Uma Chakravathy, Ania Loomba, Rajeshwari Sunderarajan and others have studied the feature of gender in relation to facets of class, tribe and caste, both in colonial and postcolonial India, and tinted the fact that articulations of the class of the “native Indian woman”, particularly in colonial conversation, is typically connected with upper class women of India, and ignores the being there of the subaltern women within the Indian country. As Jasodhara Bagchi observes, “...the myth of Indian womanhood has naturalized not merely gender subjugation, but has determined the programme for caste and class subjugation as well.” (Indian Women 1) Feminist studies in India have

significantly inspected the ways in which the female topic has been constructed in literature, in order to expose the principles that have shatterproof these constructions in social, political and familial practices.

Mahashweta Devi's works concerns of gender with exactly this sort of compassion to the socio-historic specificities of the women she stands for in her fiction. Mahashweta has often maintained that she is not a feminist writer, persisting that her concern is for all subjugated people, not just for women. Though she shies away from the tag of "feminist", Mahashweta does not make light of the subject of gendered subjugation.

Mahashweta Devi born in 1926 is an Indian writer and comes from a family of Brahman writers. Both parents wrote and so did her bother as well as her Devi's son who became a famous author. Mahashweta Devi went on to teach at Bijoygarh College while also becoming a journalist and creative writer. She has also become well known for becoming a social campaigner and bringing notice to the lives of those who are not inexpensively influential and don't have the loudest voices.

Mahashweta Devi's short stories and novels stand indication to the piece of evidence that She is a true delegate of the voice of the subalterns mainly women. The main characters in her works like Jashoda, Draupadi, Dhowli, Doulati, Gangor stand for the susceptible depiction of the gendered subaltern and sometimes the human circumstance shown in these literary works depicts a very gloomy and cursed depiction of the female Dalit characters. One of her short stories "Douloti the Bountiful" sums up the dilemma of all the subaltern women who are sexually and economically oppressed "Doulati is all over India". Mahashweta has died on 28th of July 2016 due to old age ailment.

The present paper attempts to cross-examine gender and identity through a range of women centric texts that connect with the woman enquiry in the circumstance of the Indian subcontinent. The reinforcements of power that inhere a loaded notion like gender and active in adaptable women's bodies and sexualities is deconstructed by an interpretative reading of the texts premised upon the very rebellion of the creed of a philosophy that refute women prejudice. Mahashweta Devi's writings document entity lives where women's bodies become the site of sexual domination in addition to manner the social inscription of caste/class. The paper seeks to inspect how in spite of this over strength of mind the feminist politics of the description has productively challenged women's marginalisation.

In order to appreciate current discourse of Indian women and their subalternity it is significant to know how women as a social construct also has a specific manner on her lived experience as a woman. The shift towards a money-orientated account of gender is significant to understand concurrent survival of a variety of political contexts. As Tharu and Lalita disagree Women's texts force us to tackle even as they help us chart, the overwhelming historical texturing that governs and situates feminist proposal. Socialization into gendered roles and the constitutive information about the gendered subject shaped through every day practices and social connections comprises gender individuality. In the Indian circumstance the gendered economy produces feminine identity which is constructed approximately the female body and its sexual reproductive roles. This pursues the directive of female sexuality and the historical subalternity of Indian women nourishes into the Marxist conceptualization of women as a sexual class.

The vilification of the female body leads to a series of refutations structured approximately issues of history, power and politics. Hence, I argue that for the gendered subaltern their marginalization / exclusion is compounded by the politics of individuality, nationalism, and historiography. As Vrinda Nabar puts it ... in India, the prejudice against them (women) would be by large three fold: sex based (Stri Jati), caste based (Jati) and class based. To be caste as woman in India is to live out this triple layered survival. The feminist awareness in Mahashweta's texts brings out the heterogeneity of the woman enquiry in relative to numerous subjectivities and contexts. They are exact interference/resistance to women's personification and are occupied in areas of contestation like illustration, identity, invisibility within the

structure of Indian culture and aim at considerate mainly the gendered subaltern (tribal lower caste women) and suggest different forms of confrontation. But in writing the rape into her story Mahashweta Devi rein scribes bias and agency for the speechless rape victim. She creates a low-caste raped woman the eponymous subject of description. All throughout the centre is on her and the careful details of her anguish are often interrupted with feminist comments on her misuse.

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