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Research paper



Archetypal Deconstruction In Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi"

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Abstract

Archetypes are tall those images, characters, symbols and stories that recurnumerable times in the works of literature, andlater transformed into collective prototypes. As per M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham:
"The term archetype denotes recurrent narrative designs of action, character types, themes, and images which are identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myth, dreams and even social rituals".
The Archetypal representation of the tribal women in Mahasweta Devi's Draupadi has been reviewed and reassessed in the paper along with the reference of the Ancient Draupadi depicted in the great epic Mahabharata. The attempt here is to find the 'Aboriginal Women' question while looking at women's suffering in the past in the present. 'Draupadi' by Mahasweta Devi attempts at the Deconstruction and Reconstruction of the episode of cheelharn by Duryodhan in the great epic Mahabharata. The present paper analysis the myth and showcases how Archetypes have been significant in recasting the early tradition and creates a glorious history for women as an act of survival.
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Keywords: *Archetypes; Marginalization; Oppression; Patriarchy; Subaltern.*

1. Introduction

Mahasweta Devi is an activist Bengali writer and Journalist. Her contributions are tremendous when it comes to literary and cultural studies in India. Her works in English have been translated by Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak. Her concern for the contemporary issues of politics, class and gender makes her a glaring figure in the field of socially committed literature. Being an obsessive activist, Mahasweta Devi uses her writing as a tool to win the battle of the exploited and marginalized tribal class. Moreover, the patriarchal government in family and community have been challenged by her.
Mahasweta Devi is among the most spirited writers of the present times. Born in 1926 to the home of professional writer, writing comes to her in hierarchy and numerous books including short stories plays and novels fall to her credit. Bashai Tudu, Imaginary Maps, Five Plays, Breast Stories, Rudali, Titu Mir, Till Death Do Us Part, Outcast, Choti Munda and His Arrow, In the Name of the Mother are some of her major works in English translation. She believes that women are "one half of the sky" (Kristeva, p.202).
The portrayal of the protagonists in the works of Mahasweta Devi and the refusal of the idea of Mahasweta Devi having any connection to some school of thought adds to the deconstruction of archetypes in her works. She does not regard women as a separate entity but treats their subordination as linked to "the oppressions of classes and caste "(Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha women writing in India vol. 2 (New York: the feminist press,1993) 235.
Spivak points out,
"Within a patriarchal and patronymic context, she is exceptional, indeed "attacker" in sense of odd, unpaired uncoupled. Her husbands, since they are husbands rather than lovers, are legitimately pluralized." (p.183)
Contemporary women writers like Anita Desai, Gita Hariharan, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande, Taslima Nasreen and Mahasweta Devi particularly address the issues of gender discrimination. What differentiates Mahasweta Devi from other writers both male and female, is the activist zeal in her writings and that how she deals with the issue of gender oppression enmeshed within its class and caste dichotomies.Several literary honours like Sahitya Academy (1979), Jnanpith (1996) and Remon Magasaysay (1996) have fallen to her credit because of her powerful fiction.
'Nati', her very first novel got published in 1957. Later, Bortika, a Bengali quarterly turned in a forum by her so that the disposed could write about their lives and issues and enjoy certain voice that could be heard somewhere. For this, she was ranked among the bold Bengali writers. The topics of society, politics and history were of major concern for the subject matter of her short stories and novels.
Marginalized communities, the struggle of tribal and the history finds a special place in her fiction. In terms of contempt, all her work seems to be stereotype. With a rare blend of fact and fiction, the rebellious spirit of the tortured people of the past and the present has been brought out. No emphasizing the eternal suffering of the marginalized in the patriarchal setup of society, Mahasweta Devi suggests a solution which according to her" lies in the hands of the appraisal, when they rise, and fight back only then history can be changed."
[Mahasweta Devi, foreward, rakasi kora trans, S. Sitaram (Hyderabad: Hyderabad book trust, 1982]
For this only she was recognized as a voice for the helpless,
"I have always believed that the real history is made by ordinary people, I constantly come across the reappearance in various forms of folklore, ballads myths and legends, carried by ordinary people across generations. The reason and inspiration for my writing are those people who are exploited and used, and yet do not accept defeat. For me, the endless source of ingredients for writing is in these amazingly noble, suffering human beings why should I

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'look for my raw material elsewhere, once I have started knowing them? sometimes it seems to me that my writing is really their doing, "
[Devi, interview, Outlook India]
The main thrust in the bulk of her creative work is the release of human soul from all kinds of oppression. She invests her works with the folklore and oral myths with which the people 's consciousness is steeped in and responsive to. Mahasweta Devi takes up issues of historical importance and interprets them in a contemporary setting. Her writings have been a product of her direct confrontation with the prevailing social norms. No wonder all her stories runs a single thread a profound concern for the human predicament and sincere hope for the better future of mankind. Mahasweta devi thus presents a deep concern about the retrograde conventionalities of the modern society. Mahasweta Devi is certainly,among the most spirited writers in India today it is effensive phrase and yet more can be said of her. Because of her dedication towards her writing she stands an equal status among Asian writers. Her writing has taken a form of service to the marginalized class. 0
Miller, the American deconstructionist in his essay, 'Stevens, rock and criticism' explains that Deconstruction was influenced by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida.Deconstruction dismantles itself, but do not dismantle the structure of a text. Derrida also rejected the belief of structuralists about the identifiable centers of meaning and focused to remove the thin line between binary oppositions.
"Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but think air "
All the (re)reading of philosophical writings are done by a poststructuralist theory called Deconstruction. Due to the influence of the theorists of Yale University, the influence of deconstruction on literature is that it looks at all writing as a jumbled historical process which has its roots in the relations of texts to each otherand of the conventions of writing. This approach tells that language can certainly contradict severalinterpretations of one text and does not rely on any outer reality.
Deconstructionists do not rely on the set aim of author but make interpretations according to the political or social implications of language. Deconstruction theory is therefore about shifting the center of piece from the author outward to the reader and the piece's deeper meaning for authoritative voice on a piece to hose reading and interpreting the piece, it has much in common with reader response criticism, where this theory differs from other theorists is that it looks at a very unique aspect of a text it analyzers what was left out of a text and how that influenced the piece as much as what was actually written into a piece.
"literature is, by its very nature, intensely allusive: its classics or models, once recognized as such, echo and re-echo" through all subsequent ages "___ Northrope Frye
Archetypes are all those images, characters, symbols and stories that recur numerable times in the works of literature and later turned into collective prototypes. It also denotes narrative designs of action, themes, images and character types which recur again and again in a vast variety of the works of literature as well as in myth, dreams and even social rituals.
The recurrent images are the result of the universal patterns in the psychology of human beings whose example in a literary work brings to the mind a proper response from the attentive reader, because that reader shares the same psychic patterns told by the author. These original images carry certain meanings related with human existence.
As Northrop Frye says in an article that the art is concerned with man trying to build out of nature and imagination they appeal to in a constructive power, which is neither reason nor emotion. Imagination and reality are the two aspects of literature. It tries to bring forth the truth of human life and existence.
It endeavors to find solutions to the universal questions related with human being and those solutions carry certain human experiences. Myth shares common experiences which reflect total human experience when we look at the images and patterns of a poem, play or novel. Looking at the images and patterns a poem, play or novel has in common with other poems, plays, or novels trying to show that common images and patterns in literature.
Literature is composed of myths, folklore's and legends which are given to us by the classics.
An archetypal approach tells that there is a collection of primordial images and motifs that brings the same response among all beings. And according to the psychologist Jung, these myths are the 'collective unconscious' that stays in the mind of the mankind. These collective patterns are categorized by the myth critics and tell the functioning of those in the works of literature. Those patterns from sociology, history, psychology and religion are found in most literary works. The short story of Mahasweta vi, 'Draupadi' is also a feminist response to the myth of the Indian epic Mahabharata that deconstructs the images of women, culture and stereotypes and sways the politics of interpretation has often been the politics of gender.
'Draupadi', is a story of Dopdi Majhen, highlights the victimization of a women who confronts the oppressive system. Draupadi, Naxalites activist is a Santhal. Draupadi and Dulna has been rebellion against the oppressive state/fudal nexus. They both turned to be a terror for the landlord's grain brokers and money lenders. The state launches 'Operation Jharkhani' in order to snub the Naxalite movement, first under Arjan Singh and later under Senanyak. Dulna first became the object of Senanyak's onslaught. He got entrapped while drinking water and 'countered'. Later Draupadi starts living anonymously and is on the hit list of the police. From here the story begins and proves a match for Senanyak's cunning and eludes his grasp.
Hindu Mythology of gender subaltern's body is the working force of the story, which depicts the female body as the exploited one. The protagonist depicts the unutterable ugliness as she speaks of her real situation which depicts the relationship between the tribal and classical Draupadi.
At the close of the story, she becomes the object of her feelings, instead of simply being viewed as the 'other' portrayed as the object of male desires and fears. In Epic, Draupadi serves a single incident of polyandry while the tribal Dopdi under monogamous marriage and later in a situation of multiple rapes. The deconstruction and reconstruction of the mythic figure of Draupadi has been somehow rewritten since the heroic name to the tribal Dopdi was given by the Brahmin mistress.
In the earlier case the intervention of God prevented male lust from unclothing her, but in the story Dopdi refuses to clothe herself after being gang raped.
The last atrocious scene reinvented Draupadi and she emerged to be a heroic figure. The tribal Dopdi allows men to strip her of as this has been shown as the result of political punishment. But later Dopdi ceases to exist as subaltern and hence the male leadership stopped.
Dopdi challenges Senannayak, her enemy to encounter her after undergoing the trauma of the worst that could happen to her. Draupadi here is not at all romanticized and is a meta- narrative of class, colonialism and of a hegemonic patriarchal nation state.
The archetypal Draupadi has been relegated to the position of margin and the tribal Draupadi occupies the position of centre by challenging the male society to cover her up by clothes. Hence, the literature embodies the archetypes of essential and universal human experiences. Over the ages diverse images and symbols have developed that convey these experiences. Mahasweta Devi has placed her text within the framework of myths in order to provide it with a framework of meaning that is Draupadi stands as an archetype of suffering woman.
Resistance thus prevails at the end in the stories of Mahasweta Devi. Tribal lady is not at all romanticized rather she has been depicted so real as it shakes the reader of his ignorance and indifference.

Complex emotions have been evoked though by the mere use of layman's language. Her works are powerful because they give the reader a sense of the change that could take place if women were to resist the roles prescribed to them by society. Her works push us to discourage the political and social treatment of women as objects and not individuals.

2. Origin of the Research Problem

The Hypothesis of the research is the potential to deconstruct the structural binaries of the contemporary power politics as enshrined in the hierarchal dualism between the mainstream and the aboriginal, the dominant and the Dalit/ residual, the elite and the subaltern, man and woman, first world and third world, U.S. and India with the means of the works of Mahasweta Devi. The Author Mahasweta Devi has been selected for this prospect since her works represent an expression of her deepest concern about the retrograde conventionalities of the modern society.

3. Detailed Methodology/Testing of hypothesis

- Collection of data from the primary literary sources, literary sources.
- Classification of data according to research scheme.
- Comparative analysis of data in the light of secondary sources.
- Literary method - Deconstruction
    - Archetypes
    - Works of Mahasweta Devi
- Inductive Method-
- Theory
    - Hypothesis
    - Observation
    - Confirmation

4. Data Analysis

- Examining and analyzing the archetypes that the writer has drawn forward in her work in such a way the same emotional response is seen in the reader and debunking those archetypes.
- Use of published primary and secondary sources like text books, articles, journals, critical essays, novels, plays, short stories, interviews, web- pages in order to arrive at a better understanding of the mentioned dimensions in the works of Mahasweta.
- Study the works of Mahasweta Devi in relation to her non- fictional writings and film adaptations of her select works.

5. Conclusion

The future prospect of the research will be the release of human soul, especially of downtrodden and women from all kinds of oppression and stereotypes prevailing in the patriarchal society. Archetypes/myths applied will steep in human consciousness. Myth is a framing the device used in the post-colonial fiction to interrogate historical event. It also acts as an alternative history. To gain a middle space between sacred and secular narrative, a post-colonial reading of myth is suggested. Different historical and socio-cultural contexts have been narrated by the adaptability of myth.

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