

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MAHASWETA DEVI'S "DRAUPADI" AND MAHABHARTA'S "DRAUPADI"

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### Abstract

Mahasweta Devi is a Bengali writer and has written many novels and short stories. This research paper is a comparative study of Devi's famous short story "Draupadi" and Hindu epic Mahabharata's character "Draupadi". Both women are in the same situation and are tortured by the male members of the society. It will also focus on the hollowness of the male attitude towards women in every phase of life and trying their luck on female oppression but alas failing!

Keywords:- Mahabharata, female oppression, Hindu

Mahasweta Devi, is the noted social activist and writer from Bengal. Born in 1926, in Dhaka, now in Bangladesh, she was concerned about the tribal communities' right from a tender age and is constantly working for their welfare. Mahasweta Devi has received many awards for literature and social work, the Sahitya Akademi award in 1979, the Padmashree award in 1986, the Jnanpith award in 1997, the Magsaysay award (referred to as the Asian Nobel Prize) in 1997 and the Deshikottam award in 1999. She has written around a hundred novels and about twenty short stories and "Draupadi" being one of those great short stories. "Draupadi" a short story of a girl named Dopadi, a tribal girl who is raped and tortured by the authorities of the state during the war. The character of "Draupadi" in Mahabharata, the hindu epic needs no introduction. Draupadi was the daughter of King Drupada and the wife of Pandava Princes. Pandavas lost Draupadi in the dice game played between them and the Kauravs. Thus Dushasan, the Kaurav Prince tried to disrobe and rape Draupadi in front of all other Kings, Princes and other present in the palace. This research paper tries to make a comparative study between the rape victim of Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi" and the Mahabharata's "Draupadi". It tries to unveil the naked truth of Patriarchy and female oppression. It will try to find answer to the questions, why a victim is changed from a subject to an object.

The topic of rape has always been a very sensitive issue for the victim, for the family and for the society. Society will always have preconceptions about the rape and how a woman should and will react to rape. Some women are strengthened and some are weakened by this torturous experience. The two heroines of this research paper are shown to have been more strengthened, one after been raped and the other, been tried to rape. The two protagonists, Mahasweta Devi's Dopadi and Mahabharata's Draupadi share a similarity in their lives. Dopadi, a tribal girl was raped by the higher authorities and Draupadi of Mahabharata was tried to rape by the member of her in-laws family. Of all the parts in the Mahabharata that include Draupadi, the story of

Draupadi's CheerHaran remains the most important, because it is one of the main reasons for the Mahabharata war, and it is also a breaking point for Draupadi. The disrobing of garments in both the texts, create a dramatic climax. In Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi", the unveiling of garments reveals immense female power and same is the case with Mahabharata's "Draupadi", Yudhishthira had lost her in a bet to the Kauravas, along with all of his wealth and kingdom and Dushsasana, one of the Kaurava brothers, attempts to strip off Draupadi's sari. However, Draupadi prays to Lord Krishna and he works a miracle to prevent her sari from running out of layers. Draupadi frantically pleaded her husbands to protect her. Each of them told her how helpless he was and she was saved by Krishna's miracle. This episode also throws light on the male dominated society. Though she is being tried to be raped by the opposite party of Kauravas but this cannot be said that Pandavas were on the side of justice. This incident raises a question about the relationship between husband and wife. A father gives away his daughter to her husband by performing Kanyadaan and expects that his son-in-laws will take care of his daughter but in turn what is visible is that a daughter is passed on as an object from father to son-in-laws and when the girl is with her husband he can treat her like a queen or a maid, it is his choice. That is why, Pandavas treated her as their property and lost her in the bet of dice game with Kauravas.

In Devi's "Draupadi", the main character Dopadi is presented from the beginning of the story as a woman of strong will. When she is caught by the higher authorities she doesn't lose her calm and is bold and daring. "Now Dopadi spreads her arms, raises her face to the sky, turns towards the end ululates with the force of her entire being. Once, twice and three times" (Devi, 195). This reaction at such a situation is very bold. She is not frightened but is bold and daring. At this point of climax, it is evident that the victim is not weakened but is strengthened at the worst situation. "Draupadi stands up. She pours the water down on the ground. Tears her piece of cloth with her teeth... Sena nayak walks out surprised and sees Draupadi, naked, walking towards him in the bright sunshine with her head high" (Devi, 196). When the General asks Draupadi about the unusual behaviour, the strengthened woman replies, "You asked them to make me up, don't you want to see how they made me?" (Devi, 196). No doubt, Dopadi is humiliated, raped and tortured but she is not weakened. Her bodily nakedness made her stronger. Instead of being a victim of rape she chose to be empowered by the rape.

Same is the case with Mahabharata's "Draupadi". She is humiliated and tortured in the palace full of kings and princes, but no one came forward for her help, not even her five husbands. Her reaction to the situation is same like Devi's Dopadi's. Her reaction made her brave at that very moment. Bimal Krishna Matilal comments on her courage: "Draupadi had presence of mind and fearlessness even during calamities. She could rebuke and threaten the Kauravas, Jayadratha and Kicaka for molesting her and was bold enough to argue with the members of the assemblies of the Kurus and also Virata" (Matilal 143). Sutherland comments on the power that Draupadi possesses in this incident: "The episode is ironic, though. During the scene we are made aware that the beautiful Draupadi is possessed also of quick wit and a clever tongue. Her ability at debate is soon demonstrated, and at the conclusion of the episode, we realize that her wit has saved her husbands from impending slavery" (Sutherland 67). This would be wrong to say that she is not affected by the situation. She was deeply affected and was very emotional. Bhawalkar comments on the emotional side of Draupadi: "Draupadi, unlike the mythological goddess or the ideal heroines of our ancient literature, was quite human with human emotions and feelings like anger, love, hate, happiness and grief. Her life was full of ups and downs and she maintained her dignity in both the situations" (Bhawalkar 141). This shows

very clearly that the situation made Draupadi strong. Her inner strength came in front of everyone present in the court.

While concluding, it becomes clearer that there are a lot of similarities between the two texts. Both represent the true Feminist nature. Both the characters face the same situations and reacted similarly to the tragedy befalling upon them. They are not weakened but are empowered and strengthened. They made us believe that a female can be an epitome of love, care, devotion and at the same time she can be Goddess Durga and Kali when it is about their self respect and dignity.

**Workcited**

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