



## Mahasweta Devi's Dopdi—the Embodiment of Emancipation

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### ABSTRACT

'Draupadi' by Mahasweta Devi triggers the discourse on traumatizing and heart-wounding experiences of male voyeurism. Draupadi is a story about Dopdi Mejhen; the story delineates how a marginalized tribal woman becomes the victim of selfish, brutish patriarchy and takes the incarnation of 'Kaali'—the entity of feminine strength and potentiality at the fag-end of the story facing various kinds of objectification and marginalization in the chauvinist society. The story narrates the predicament of the heroine-protagonist Draupadi who is captivated between the utmost turmoil of existential livelihood and the usurped feudalistic-bourgeoisie state.

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### Introduction:

Dopdi-Mejhen, a Santhal informer-activist and his husband redoubtable Dulna Majhi had protested violently against the feudal kingpin, Surja Sahu who with the connivance of state-officials had managed to get two tube wells and three wells dug within the compound of his two houses. And at that time Birbhum was reeling under draught due to the tremendous scorching heat-wave. Surja Sahu and his class did not share their 'unlimited water' with the tribals. This incident enraged the tribals who are always deprived from the privileged mainstream nation. Dulna Majhi et all surrounded Sahu's house at night. That tyrannical beast was tied up with cow rope. His whitish eye-balls turned round but his incontinent motive remained unchanged. Dulna had said violently- "I will have the first blow, brothers. My great grandfather took a little bit paddy from him and I still give him free labour to repay back that debt". Draupadi, the emblem of violent protest and the mouth piece of unspoken tribals said that he gazed at

her lustily with an urge of sexual gratification. She determined to pull out his two lustful eyes. Surja Sahu brought out his gun but the strong, abled opponent were able to tie him and Satish mandal, Jugal Mondal, Dopdi and Dulna under the leadership of Arijit killed Surja Sahu and his son.

Then a “telegraphic message” came from Shiuri. Special train arrived with armies. The police vehicle did not come up to the Bakuli. The crunching sound of gravel under the “hobnailed boots” was heard. The commands to cordon up the village were heard in the ambience of Bakuli. The police commanders ordered to surrender the murderers. But there was no question of surrendering. The police started firing and the village Bakuli was on pandemonium. Dopdi et all kept themselves in a Neanderthal region for safety.

### **The Myth of Draupadi:**

Devi’s brilliant literary creation ‘Draupadi’ is the tribalized re-incarnation of the classic ‘Draupadi’—the famous heroine- protagonist of Epic “Mahabharata”. But Devi’s “Draupadi” asserts the predicament of the protagonist Dopdi (tribalized name) who is in utmost turmoil between the pulls of subsistence living and the feudalistic logic of bourgeoisie state and its allied. One of the puranas says that—

“In krita Yuga Renuka was Kritiya.

In Satya Yuga Sita was Kritiya,

In Dwapara Yuga Draupadi was Kritiya,

In Kali yuga, there are Kriyas in every home”

Devi’s ‘Draupadi’ is at once palimpsest and contradiction. The character of Dopdi is a modern re-incarnation of the classical Draupadi. Modern feminist critics re-interpret her as the embodiment of violent protest, the personality of out-burst of smoldering vengeance, the mouth-piece of unspoken tribals. In N. Chandra’s ‘Pratighat’ and Sekhar Kapur’s ‘Bandit Queen’ we see the protagonists as the resemblance of the incarnation of Goddess Kaali. Here in the protagonist the narrator tries to endow such responsibility. In Mahabharata she was married to the great five Pandava Brothers of Mahabharata. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out—“in the patriarchal and patronymic context she is exceptional, indeed attacker to the odd, unpaired uncoupled. Her husbands, since they are husbands rather than lovers, are legitimately pluralized.” Mahasweta’s Draupadi interrogate, this singularity. In Kauraba palace, Divine Krishna, ‘the king of all kings’ saved Draupadi’s dignity from the clutches of male lust

from unclothing her. But here Devi's 'Draupadi' doesn't howl towards sky crying for the divine help. Devi represents Dopdi as the source of power and potentiality and her character-representation is an instance of outright rejection of the phallocratic myth of Mahabharata. Here when Mr. Senanayak after arresting her ordered soldiers "Make her, do the needful". After the multiple-gang-rape of police, Dopdi rejects to be clothed. She castigates the patriarchal authority vehemently when she asserts ".....what's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you man?" After plundering, padlock is unnecessary— similarly after the bankruptcy of feminine dignity, is there any need of mere outward cloth? Naked, her bitten raw breasts, nipples torn, vagina bleeding—Dopdi, the stalwart of female potentiality walks towards Mr. Senanayak, the foul, brute. By pushing him with her mangled breasts, she challenges him— leaving terribly afraid before an "unarmed target"— his " Object of search". Devi through her dynamic and vibrant manner and eloquent style draws the sunshine in the cloudy sky of feminine world through the characterization of modern militant "Dopdi".

### **Dopdi—a Woman of Emancipation:**

Mahasweta Devi's Draupadi (included in Agnigarva, 1978 ) translated by Devi scholar, Post-colonial feminist and theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak— is a brilliant portrayal of violence and resistance by Devi's heroine- protagonist tribe woman Dopdi Mejhen, who defies to clothe herself, not only upholds the corrupt, lusty and venomous face of political repressive forces including Government, feudalistic bureaucrats and the state sponsored other sycophants, but also throws the over-arching challenges to the post-colonial state embodied by the scoundrel Mr. Senanayak.

It narrates the pathetic plight of a tribal woman who is captivated between the turmoil of subsistence of living and the feudalistic logic of bourgeoisie-modernist state and its allied. Dopdi Mejhen and Dulna Majhi protests that main-stream privileged society—feudal nexus. They belong to 'Naxalites' or 'Naxal' groups that adopt a fierce strategy against the feudal kingpins, landlords and others in power who exploit the landless grassroot level persons and the tribal people claiming a corruption-free society devoid of class and contradictions, discriminations. Since time immemorial, women have been the victim of marginalization, humiliation, sexual gratification, and objectification. In the stream of marginalization, women are in worse situation. Women's position in society especially of the marginalized/ peripheral/ grass-root level one is extremely pre-occupied with the sense of innocuous negligence. Marginalized people (Dalits, Tribals, Santhals) do not have any 'proper' identity in male-dominated society. Here, the central character Dopdi is the victim to third degree of sexual violence and she ravages vehement

outburst, scathing protest patriarchal society. After arresting her, Mr. Senanayak commands the commanders—‘make her. Do the needful’. Dopdi is raped repeatedly throughout the night when the moon, the female entity sinks down vomiting wane light. Rape is just like a bolt in the forehead of an innocent married woman. But the rape which is perpetuated and written over her body that is considered to ‘victimize and shame woman’ is in turn used by her as a mean of empowerment. We find her battered and naked body and in such a fiery way she gazes upon the soldiers that make the rapers feel to shame. There is no divine deliverance. Devi’s narrative does not let her protagonist cry raising her hands for divine help. In her battered body, nipples torn, breasts bitten raw, vagina bleeding, she stands up steadily before the bloody rascals. Though pushing with her mangled breasts, she challenges Mr. Senanayak from whom she dethrones the blue blood of masculinity. Mr. Senanayak witnessing such horrific, lunatic, protesting incarnation of Dopdi first time feels frightened before ‘unarmed target’—object of his search. With an unconquerable spirit, Dopdi—the representative of marginalized, the mouthpiece of the unspoken tribals confronts all the rapists defiantly. Mahasweta Devi with her live experience and daring jugglery of words raises a turbulence amidst the dumbfounded unfortunate people; her literary piece is an attempt to upsurge of immediacy for the marginalized people who are unnoticed, unheard and untrod.

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