



Identifying “Draupadi” as a Political Figure in the Works of Mahasweta Devi & Heisnam Kanhailal

Subhranil Mahato

Research Scholar

Department of English

Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University

mahato.subhranil@gmail.com

Abstract

Exploring the realms of suffering of the marginalized ones is the forte of Mahasweta Devi’s writings. Associating her socio-political activism, Devi’s works portray the concept of the gendered subaltern, which implies the extreme subalternation of women based on gender and nationality, caste or class. Many of her influential writings have asserted the perspective of women, alienated from the patriarchal pole. Moreover, she has mainly concentrated on the abject suffering of the tribal women, for whom oppression has become a common fate in the orthodox patriarchal society. What is interesting is that this paper will not only include Devi’s short story “Draupadi”, but also its Manipuri theatrical adaptation by Heisnam Kanhailal of the same name. Apart from the different political and historical context, both of these works resonate a strong resistance and dissent against the frameworks and structures of patriarchy. Both evolve and develop a strong resistance against the current of the dehumanized sufferings. This politics of representation in these two works also could be interpreted as a politics for voice and agency. While discussing Devi’s short story “Draupadi” and Kanhailal’s play *Draupadi*, this paper will also shed light on the transformation of the central character from a distressed and pallid sufferer to a powerful protestor and warrior, and a political one. Analyzing the political backdrops, these hint towards the contemporary social conditions in India and will reflect upon the place and identity of women within the hegemonic domain of patriarchy.

Keywords: women, India, marginalization, suffering, politics, resistance

