

Cast, Phallogocentrism and Feudalism in Mahaswetha Devi's "Rudali"

Yogini.A.Solanki
English Department
C.U.Shah Science college
Ahemedabad

Gayathri chakravarthy spivak in her essay 'A literary representation of the subaltern' writes "In the case of class- manipulation, 'poverty' is]the fault of the individuals,not an intrinsic part of a class society";in the case of caste manipulation,the implicit assumption is the reverse:the Brahmin is systemically excellent not necessarily so as an individual".(p.352).

Mahaswetha Devi was born in 1926 in Dhaka, in a privileged middle-class Bengali family. She is an extraordinary woman who has written and fought for the marginalized tirelessly for the past six decades. she is a culmination of an activist and a writer working for the betterment of subaltern in her own way of protesting against the atrocities on down trodden by the main stream society. Mahaswetha Devi's literary oeuvre comprises stories around contemporary social and political realities, a majority of which span a reasonably free time range in independent India, and are located in fictitious or real settings. Before going to trace the theme of subalternity which is prevailing in Mahaswetha Devi's literary composition, let me explain what subalternity is? What subaltern is? Literally subaltern refers to any person or group of inferior rank and station, whether because of race,class,gender,sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion. Subalternity is subordinationinferiority,exploitation,hegemony by the superior on the inferior which became inevitable in the present capitalist society. Rudali by Mahaswetha Devi is a powerful indictment of the socio-economic system in India. It also comes as an attack on vestiges of feudalism in rural India.

It is ironical that in India, woman is regarded as a representation of Goddess yet she is exploited and marginalized by the upper classes. Rudali records the transformation of Sanichari and her empowerment. Sanichari, the principal character on whom the story concords around is a ganju woman. she is the representative of the gendered subaltern, the subject who is both low caste and woman at the same time. The life of sanichari is used by the writer as metonymy to represent the life of community altogether which at the same time the reality in Indian villages. Economical and social status of an individual depends on the caste and family they are born in. They have their own limitations and are forced to abide by the rules and regulation of the village. In Rudali she portrays the low cast women as victim and as a potentially subversive agent in the phallogocentric brahmanical patriarchy and its values sphere and epistemology. The de-sentimentalized and detached narrative of the novel presents the hopeless predicament of sanichari and fellow low caste women in a north Indian village of brahmanic verna and caste patriarchy in the later half of the twentieth century the news between caste, phallogocentrism and feudalism is the hegemonic structure in this typical rural north Indian village, that shockingly breaks the stereotypes and the romanticized images of the village. Sanichari was a ganju by caste like the other villagers her life too was lived in desperate poverty.

Mahaswetha Devi with the help of the life of sanichari makes the reader to get an idea of the picture of the whole community. How the upper class Brahmins dominate the life of lower class people of the community. The desperate poverty suffered by them makes sanichari as well as the subalterns who are dominated by the ruling elite in every every aspect of their life. Even her psychological aspect of grief is dominated by the upper class in the modes of religion and rituals. Sanichari didn't cry when her mother-in-law died, as her husband and brother-in-law were away in jail; the most important thing to her at that night is to cremate her mother-in-law before dawn keeps her away of wailing. Ramavatar Singh's callous nature is revealed in the very beginning of the short story, as he locks up all the ganjus and dhushads for a meager loss of wheat. It was a threat to the community altogether that they will be thrown out of the village.

In Rudali she portrays the low cast women as victim and as a potentially subversive agent in the phallogocentric brahmanical patriarchy and its values sphere and epistemology. The de-sentimentalized and detached narrative of the novel presents the hopeless predicament of sanichari and fellow low caste women in a north Indian village of brahmanic verna and caste patriarchy in the later half of the twentieth century the news between caste, phallogocentrism and feudalism is the hegemonic structure in this typical rural north Indian village, that shockingly breaks the stereotypes and the romanticized images of the village. Sanichari was a ganju by caste like the other villagers her life too was lived in desperate poverty.