SIGNIFICANCE OF MAHASWETA DEVI'S LITERARY WORKS IN TRIBAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Abstract:
Present paper deals with the role of Mahasweta Devi’s literary works in tribal historiography which was intentionally neglected by the mainstream historians. She meticulously studied the various aspects of tribal literature and gave it a realistic touch and brings it into the mainstream of the society. She collected tribal's folk literature and precisely studied it. She reflected the glorious past of tribal culture from her entire literary works. Her characters are the portrayal of real tribal revolutionaries and legends. Her works pave the way for new literary era in tribal literature. She also shed light on the tribal dialects, cultural rituals, traditions, and various aspects of tribal life. She precisely unveiled the glorious past of tribal literature and historiography.

Keywords: Tribal, Tribal Historiography, Subaltern, Tribal Consciousness, cultural hegemony.

INTRODUCTION: TRIBAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Mahasweta Devi, an astounding literary figure, worked hard for the upliftment of the tribals by projecting their glorious culture to the world. She dedicated her entire life for the welfare of tribals. Her works i.e. Chhoti Munda and His Arrow, Aranyar Adhikar, Mother 1084, The Queen of Jhansi, The Fire Within, and Prothom Path are the reflection of tribal people’s culture, their history and identity. Her fictional oeuvre attempts to overthrow the domination of mainstream society’s biased history writings and filled the gaps and absences which are the symbols of marginalization of tribals. Ranajit Guha precisely states, “History of Indian nationalism is a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite.” He opined that the history
written by the mainstream society’s people is prejudiced as it failed to depict the struggle of tribal as well as other subaltern people. Rewriting and revising the history of tribals, she highlighted the efforts of marginalized people against discrimination and marginalization by upper class. She challenged these gaps and absences in the tribal people’s history written by mainstream society. She adopted deconstructive strategies to correct the history through her entire literary works and her non-heroes become heroes.

An enormous entity exists about the tribal culture and their glorious past in the form of tradition. It orally transmitted from a generation to other generations. This form has been unavoidably considered as songs, poetry, and myths. The historians intentionally don’t make use of tribal literature because they categorized it as a fictional works. However, Mahasweta Devi used these tribal materials: the songs, poetry, and myths extensively in her literary works. According to Gayatri Spivak, “Devi’s fictions are the reflections of history projected through fictions.” She fastidiously raised the issues of tribals and endeavored to spread awareness among the tribals with respect to their rights through her fictional works.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Banerjee, Prathama (2016), *Writing the Adivasi: Some Historiographical Notes*, this article investigates the likelihood of another field of research called Adivasi studies. It considers how Adivasi history and Adivasi subjectivity have developed both in the space of disciplinary information and in India's national and territorial governmental issues. Consistently alluding to our experience of how Dalit studies have come to fruition in India, and with gender studies somewhere in the background, the paper investigates that so as to cut out a field of Adivasi thinks about, we should return to narratives of political and scholarly portrayal, political and social self-governance, vernacular dialects and without a doubt religion and conversion.

Sharma, Dr. Anjali (2017), *Works of Mahasweta Devi: A Critical Exploration*, examines different subaltern issues in colonial and postcolonial setting. Present work dissects the state of subalterns in India, imperialism and racial subalternity, postcolonialism and subaltern personality, and different postcolonial interpretations. It investigates the magnificence of Devi's works and her commitment in arousing the soul of tribal people. She additionally shed light on the subjects i.e. expulsion, refusal, relocation and social disintegration of these people.
Tucker, Aviezer (2004), *Our Knowledge of the Past: A Philosophy of Historiography*, present book studies our knowledge of history, its nature, historical development, epistemic limits, and scope. Philosophy of historiography interpretations is precisely elaborated in the present study. The philosophy of scientific historiography is also discussed in the present research. This book introduces a philosophical examination of the disciplines that offer logical learning of the past. Utilizing the expository devices of contemporary epistemology and reasoning of science the book covers such themes as theory, methodology, technique, clarification, assurance and under-determination, occurrence, possibility and counterfactuals in historiography.

Singh, Satpal (2016), *Aesthetics of Protest: A Study of the Works of Mahasweta Devi*, critically analyzed the literary works of Mahasweta Devi. It is an apprehensive effort which glorifies her as an eminent writer with social cordiality and affection. It explores how dominant classes socio-economically exploit the marginalized people. Corrupt political leaders and government officials have worsened the condition of these people. Devi precisely explored the plight of tribal and inculcates the seeds of revolt in the minds of the people.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

Descriptive and analytical research methods are used in the present research. Data has been collected from primary as well as secondary sources. Mahasweta Devi’s novels, short stories, interviews, unpublished and other works are used as a primary data sources and the works of other authors, research papers, speeches, various, magazine, newspaper articles are used for the research as secondary data sources. Data is collected from the various sources regarding Devi’s perspective towards social consciousness among the downtrodden people about their rights. Various concepts such as social consciousness, social evils, subaltern, feminism, casteism, self-identity, realism, marginalization are studied thoroughly and use in the research paper. Data regarding the research paper is taken from various sites, journals, magazines and newspaper articles.

**REWITING, RECONSTRUCTING, AND ACKNOWLEDGING THE UNRECORDED HISTORY OF THE TRIBAL:**
Mahasweta Devi started to write about the tribal history because once a tribal girl asked her when she would go to school, when they read about Mahatma Gandhi’s contribution in freedom struggle; she also inquired whether they had heroes or not and how many time they have to endure the agonies or cruelties? (Imaginary Maps, iii). It compelled Devi to write about the tribal history. She precisely projected the freedom struggle of tribal heroes and glorified their efforts through her entire literary works. She rewrote the history to highlight the efforts taken by tribal heroes. Devi’s resurgence of the revolts of the tribal heroes like Siddhu Kanhu and Tirka Manzi in her fiction’s projects well chronicled, scopious, and well probed history.

Devi strove hard to bring out the oral tradition of the indigenous people to the spotlight of upper-class society. She pleaded them to respect the importance and capaciousness of tribal history and their culture. She glorified the history of tribal people through her novels: Chotti Munda and His Arrow, Titu Mir, and Bashai Tudu. It is very exciting to explore the way she intermingles the legendary struggles, oral tradition, and myths with precisely chronicled facts in order to rewrite and restructured the past. These novels encompass the history of indigenous people from colonial to contemporary period. Her other novels fill the gaps and absences in the history of tribal people from the perspectives of subalterns.

**LITERARY SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVI’S WORKS IN TRIBAL HISTORIOGRAPHY:**

*Chotti Munda and His Arrow* is the foremost novel where Devi voiced the history of tribal people with colonial and postcolonial history. The novel highlights the tales and miserable condition of tribals and their relentless counteraction against corrupt, guileful invaders, and dominant oppressors. “It inquires and unveils the labyrinth of socio-economic exchange based on the stratified dominancy. It also depicts the shifts in the daily lives of oppressed tribals and celebrates the legendary character of Chotti who is thoughtful and foresighted luminary, a role model for his young fraternity” (Devi 2002:Jacket). She demystify and rewrite the history of Indian Freedom Struggle by projecting the truth that how mainstream Hindu upper caste society’s people: capitalists, landlords, hoteliers exploited tribals. Her works glorified the tribal people’s historical revolts against the British rule which was insensibly neglected by the upper caste people.
Bashai Tudu is an interfusion of realism and fantasy, history and fiction (Bashai Tudu, 18). She propagated multidimensional nature of history and blurred the frontiers of traditional history writings. It is the story of a peasant mutiny who fights against the dominant and oppressive people. Novel attempts to highlight the courage of subaltern rationalist who raise his voice whenever the labors face crisis; he prepares them for the revolt and stand against the oppressive people. Devi wrote her fictional history as she wanted to expose the cruelties and exploitation of marginalized people in Indian society. Bashai reincarnates and revolts repeatedly whenever dominant people and administration subjugate the marginalized people.

Present novel unmask the flip side of socio-economic history unveils dominancy of subjugation devised by the upper caste people. In this novel, Devi deciphers the manipulation of history dominated by aristocrats who grant the permission for marginalization of the tribal people and recognizing the history of tribal people’s revolts as myths. She never fictionalized the history instead give it a realistic touch to aware the people about the tribals’ revolts undertaken by their contemporary leaders.

Titu Mir, projects various qualities of the protagonist which make him different from other members of his family as well as society. He never confines himself within a particular sphere instead he always crave for opening-up the frontiers and do something heroic for the marginalized people of the society. His father Nisar’s remark is apt in this context. He remarks, “Consider Nolu and then look at Titu. Nolu is a householder like me. But Titu is like some uncrowned emperor, born into our house by mistake. He has been unable to tolerate injustices since he was a teenager” (Titu Mir, 45). Titu was very much aware about the prevalent exploitation of the marginalized people. He always revolted against oppressive people for the betterment of commoners.

CONCLUSION:

Mahasweta Devi was a writer who never followed traditional path of writing. She meticulously interweaves the history and fiction in the context of untold history of tribal and uncovered the real history of tribal people’s revolt against their exploitation by upper caste people. Aristocratic people located the history of tribal revolts as a myth but Devi explored these facts with shrewd techniques of writing. She thoroughly researched the history of tribal people
and the revolts undertaken by their leaders and documented it. Her novels have realistic touch because her protagonists are the real tribal heroes who awakened the spirit of ordinary people. Her works are the reflection of her felt experiences with the tribal people. She experienced the plight of these people and highlighted it in her novels. Thus, Devi’s literary oeuvre plays vital role in tribal historiography because her novels explore the untold history of tribal culture, their marginalization, and their revolts.

REFERENCES:


