



Research Paper

## Relative Study of Mahasweta Devi's 'Dopdi' And Vyasa's 'Draupadi'

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Mahasweta Devi was a Bengali literary legend. On July 28, 2016, she passed away after a four-year battle with cancer. Her work includes short tales, novels, and children & stories. She was a prolific writer who utilised her pen to portray her political agenda. She used her stories in order to highlight the condition of the underprivileged, especially landless labourers and tribals from Bihar and West Bengal. The short story of 'Dopdi', from her short story collection Breast Stories, was my first experience with her writing. It was originally written in Bengali and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak translated it into English. Because of its daring representation of defiance and rebellion, 'Dopdi' or 'Draupadi' had a lasting impression on me. This short story is powerful to me not just because it brings to the reader a story of state violence with such alarming urgency and vascularity, but also because it tells us of an unthinkable act of courage – reclaiming and affirming your humanity in the face of those who seek to deprive you of it through unimaginable violence. The story is set against in the backdrop of West Bengal's highly volatile Naxalite struggle. Dopdi, a Santhal woman, is the protagonist. She is a member of a tribal rebel organisation that was engaged in the death of the cruel landlord, Surja Sahu, along with many others. During a drought, Surja Sahu dug up two tube wells. No one from the lower caste was allowed to use the tube wells, which ultimately became the reason for his murder. To make Dopdi speak against her fellow members and confess to the crime, she was raped time and again by Senanayak, the officer, and his men. The story is a powerful, honest, and disturbing indictment of government violence against the poor. Women's bodies are used as a tool of oppression and torment by the state. They are used to demonstrate the State's dominance and authority. Dopdi's body, on the other hand, is portrayed by Mahasweta Devi as a site over which she has entire agency and authority. Dopdi rises naked from her chains and boldly approaches Senanayak to examine her damaged and wounded body at the story's conclusion, displaying a tremendous reversal of abilities. She spits on Senanayak and refuses to dress herself, claiming- "There isn't a single man in this room of whom I should feel ashamed. I will not allow you to cover me with my cloth. Is there anything else you can do? Come on, counter me—come on, counter me—come on, counter me—come on, counter me—come on, counter me." Her determination is unwavering. Senanayak, who prided himself on knowing the opponent intimately, was terrified of an unarmed target. Dopdi, unlike her Mahabharata namesake, does not have a saviour. Because of this, she is assertive rather than passive. Dopdi rejects the state's notions of aggression and morality. She flips the situation on its head, refusing to be ashamed or bent down by their heinousness. Even in the face of such unfathomable violence, she demonstrates courage. As a result, Dopdi thoroughly owns and subverts all concepts of female subjugation. Senanayak is perplexed as she laughs out loud. Dopdi is considered to have gone insane. But that notion is rooted in a terrible patriarchal belief that women might readily become hysterical under duress. Dopdi, on the other hand, demonstrates her mastery of the situation by laughing wildly. Dopdi was supposed to be embarrassed by her nakedness, but instead she confronts the offenders in a righteous and menacing manner, challenging them to do worse to her.

Draupadi is a stunning story that depicts the weird contradiction of being defiant and reclaiming agency despite the presence of dread. Draupadi from the Mahabharata is reimagined in a modern, political, and tribal setting. Mahasweta Devi does so by shedding attention on the tribal populace's language, music, beliefs, and ideas, which are mostly ignored by the mainstream political imagination. This leads to the erroneous belief that religion and customs are homogeneous. Draupadi is a powerful story that shatters all of our political illusions. If Draupadi was colonised twice by patriarchal society and the coloniser, Dopdi is colonised three times, because she is racialized by the upper castes and classes, in addition to these two layers of subordination. Devi develops a counterpoint between the two characters in her reproduction of Dopdi. The epic's Draupadi, like the Ramayana's Sita, is a heroine of Indian culture and literature. Draupadi, unlike Dopdi, is of high caste and is one of India's few cases of polyandry, as she is shared by the Pandava family's five brothers. If Dopdi had a monogamous marriage, on the other hand, the police officers raped her repeatedly after her imprisonment, which, ironically, brings her closer to the image of Draupadi. Both ladies have been involved in violent situations that have been brought on by men. In the instance of Draupadi, her eldest husband, who had a weakness for gambling, had bet her in a dice game and was about to lose her. The chief of the Kaurava family, enemies of the Pandava family, treated Draupadi as a prostitute and believed that it was not shameful to strip her in public because the Vedas do not sanction polyandry. Draupadi made a request to Lord Krishna, and he covered her with an infinitely long fabric each time King Kaurava pulled her sari. Mythological reinterpretation of Mahasweta Devi's 'Dopdi Mejhén' and Mahabharata's 'Draupadi' As a typical demonstration of phallic authority, Dopdi tells Senanayak that he ordered her to be stripped, attacked, and tortured. In any event, he's not strong enough to make her change her clothes. The story closes on a tense note, with a bare Dopdi's brave refusal to cover her nude body, leaving a few watchmen and the self-important officer defenceless, afraid, and unsure how to control an unarmed lady. The name Dopdi, which is a tribal colloquial variant of the ancient name Draupadi, is the first similarity that both figures embody. Despite the fact that both Dopdi and Draupadi are exploited by male predators who derive pleasure and satisfaction from the female suffering, they refuse to accept their unfortunate fate and rise against all odds. Both women take matters into their own hands in the fight against patriarchal authorities. A group of Special Forces men in the story, sexually abuse and torture Dopdi Mejhén. Dopdi was kidnapped and shackled, and she was compelled to put up with the cruelty she faced simply because she was a woman, and a tribal woman at that. It's crucial to note that, while Dopdi and Draupadi's fates are remarkably similar, the trauma they experienced is not identical. The Kaurava family abused Draupadi in vengeance for the Pandavas. The woman was persecuted in the Mahabharata in order to irritate the men, which is reflected in society in a variety of ways. The framework in which the woman is used as an object to meet male wants, whether sexual, emotional, or physical, is shown in several works of literature. Both women, victims of a misogynistic culture, refuse to be tortured and accept their positions in order to reject the violence they have been subjected to. The fates of Mahabharata's Draupadi and Mahasweta Devi's Dopdi are eerily similar, with both being abused and tortured by male authorities in society. Both women chose to voice their wrath and fury by criticising society's misogynist nature rather than suffer in quiet. Mahasweta Devi takes the Draupadi narrative from the Mahabharata and builds a story of tyranny and exploitation of modern women around it. Draupadi and Dopdi are two examples of women who have been subjected to gender-based brutality since ancient times. The mythical echoes of Draupadi illustrate the repeating nature of a society that denies women the right to live freely. Another side of feminism in the country is exemplified by this. Both Vyasa's Draupadi and Devi's Dopdi represent women marginalisation in society, with similarities in their characters. "Vyasa and Mahasweta Devi see their heroines in an unexpected circumstance and demonstrate how, at the most vital moment, they uncover their Power inside, establishing their feminine identities." Draupadi can be seen through Dopdi Mejhén, an allegory to Mahabharata's Draupadi. Draupadi was obliged to bear the painful position as a result of her husbands, the Pandavas. The Special Forces gang-raped Dopdi because they considered it was the most effective way to tame and destroy the woman's inner might and soul. Dopdi by Mahasweta Devi tackle society's patriarchal nature, which implies a woman is nothing more than her dignity. Men assault women physically, molest and rape them in the hopes that the woman would be emotionally and physically devastated, allowing men to triumph. Since the dawn of time, men have utilised physical power to dominate women, particularly those who oppose society's patriarchal framework. When the Kauravas humiliated Draupadi, she sobbed at the insult she had to bear in front of her husbands. Dopdi was cruelly produced by the men of the Senanayak under his directions, unlike the famed Krishna of Vyasa's Draupadi, and she had no one to defend her. Despite their similar circumstances, both ladies represent political and societal oppression of women who have a voice, since they appear to bring into question the fragile male identity. Dopdi Mejhén is presented at the start of the tale as the personification of bravery and might, and this is maintained throughout. To get the information they wanted, the men decided it was necessary to strip Dopdi of her modesty. Dopdi's predicament would have been different if the environment had been different, that is, if she had been born into a caste with a higher social status. Even if she had not been brutalised, it is impossible to say if she would have been spared as a result of Vyasa's Draupadi's predicament, which was comparable to Dopdi Mejhén's. Dopdi is, as previously said, a reincarnation of the fabled Draupadi, albeit there are some differences. Senanayak ordered Dopdi "to be

made” in order to shame and ruin her for leading an insurgency in Bengal against landowners who refused to give the tribes their legitimate land resources. For Dopdi, the humiliation attempt traumatised her, thus being empowered inherently helps her break free from the shackles of injustice and discrimination. After regaining consciousness after the incident, Dopdi washes herself and refuses to be clothed. . The males in the camp, who had earlier lustfully stripped her off of her modesty, were taken aback by her decision to approach Senanayak's tent naked. The horrified and incredulous body is cheered the next morning when they see the mutilated body they had lustfully slaughtered the night before. Among the submissive, docile, and humble ladies, the female character's strength jumps out. In the current analysis, it appears that understanding the requirement to react to traditional assumptions is important. The men were repelled by Dopdi's conscious display of her naked and injured body, as they were unable to accept Dopdi's courage and fortitude, despite the harm they had inflicted on her. Vyasa's Draupadi, shrieked her revenge for all to hear, and the men in her life carried it out. Despite the fact that Draupadi is often portrayed as the symbol of feminine and female power who spoke out against gender-based violence, she chose to involve men in her fight against her molesters in the name of male-ego and power politics. Dopdi Mejhén, on the other hand, does not wait for a man to save her; instead, she rises to the situation, fearless and bold. “Senanayak watches Draupadi, naked, striding toward him in the glaring sunlight with her head up, and tears her piece of cloth with her teeth.... Draupadi (Dopdi) rises..... What is this, exactly? He looks like he's about to cry, but suddenly he stops. In front of him, Draupadi stands naked. My thighs and pubis hair were matted with crusted blood. There are two wounds and two breasts. What is this, exactly? He's on the verge of yelling. Your target, Dopdi Mejhén, stands with her hand on her hip, laughs, and asks, You asked them to create me; don't you want to know how they accomplished it?” The men were only able to strip Dopdi of her clothes and modesty, but they were unable to remove her identity and integrity. Dopdi confronts the man who wanted to kill her merely because she was a woman from the lowest caste who dared to speak out against the persecution of the defenceless and needy. The forerunners of female insurrection against male oppression, Vyasa's Draupadi and Mahasweta Devi's Dopdi, exhibited empowerment via their actions. Both the female characters illustrate women suffering while also giving them a platform to denounce the ugliness of Indian society. Unlike traditional Indian mythological characters, the new Indian mythological characters contribute to many forms of feminism, therefore making history. They stood up to male-power oppression and demonstrated that women are more than simply objects to be manipulated by the male ego. “While Draupadi is miraculously clothed in the epic, Dopdi Mejhén, a modern-day rebel, refuses to be clothed, leaving everyone present purple and naked. Both the Draupadis are vengeance icons and great role models.”

#### Resistance through Female Body

The Draupadi story outperforms the epic in terms of destruction and the victim's reaction. Dopdi, does not turn to the gods for help. Dopdi's rebellion takes place in the wilds of a forest, rather than in the court of a Maharaja. Dopdi is not blessed with a supernatural male saviour. The officers under Senanayak, offer her a piece of cloth to cover her humiliation after repeatedly raping her all night. Dopdi spits the water, tears the fabric to bits, and refuses to be covered by male-defined ideas like shame and female modesty. Covering up would have been a reaffirmation and strengthening of patriarchal ideology constructs of female honour and breach of woman's modesty and subjecthood. The strength of Dopdi's defiance, on the other hand, lies not in her refusal to act, but in her inability to behave predictably. She redefines the concept of a woman's sexual honour, when she steps out naked and confronts Senanayak. Unlike the mythological Draupadi, she rejects the guilt, fear, shame, or servility that are commonly associated with the discourse of her making. Dopdi challenges the brutalizer to counter her and, rather than lamenting the loss of her respect and modesty, she goes on to question her maker's masculinity. Draupadi's lamentations are entirely dislocated and denigrated by Dopdi's behaviour as she tries to stir the masculine energy of the great patriarchs in the epic tale. In a stunning shift, the weak indigenous lady, symbolised by Senanayak, challenges the full power of a ruthless postcolonial state. Dopdi approached Senanayak, ridiculed his phoney masculinist pride and challenged him to 'counter her'. Indeed, Draupadi successfully distinguishes violation from victimisation, shattering the victim-agent binary. Dopdi manages to intimidate her offenders by using her wounded body as a weapon while standing naked in front of them. According to Mahasweta Devi's translator Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Draupadi becomes a 'terrifying super object' by refusing the disciplining power of guilt embedded in the act of rape.

#### Conclusion

Devi's writing transcends beyond a linguistic and aesthetic act to become a political act against forms of gender and racial oppression, in this case of a marginalised community such as the Tribal in India, as revealed by the story's theme and style. Spivak's translation, in turn, is a form of resistance in that she emphasises the importance of spreading the story of a marginalised community's suffering throughout India and internationally in order to serve as an example to the many women who are oppressed by patriarchal society, as well as to other marginalised groups. The literary work and its translation become an alternative discourse that recreates the

identity of the tribal subjugated while problematizing and deconstructing the Indian nationalist narrative, thanks to the collaboration of the author and translator.