



Research Paper

Voice of Subaltern Women: Rebel against the Patriarchal Society In Reference To Kabita Sinha's "Eve Speaks To God"

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ABSTRACT: Women have always been a victim of a male-dominated society. They have been marginalized, discriminated and subjugated from time immemorial. This article aims at how Kabita Sinha raises the voice of marginalized women by representing biblical Eve in modern form. Kabita Sinha is a Bengali poet who wrote about the subjugations faced by women belonging both to Bible and the present time. Though the women may be treated the same in both, there are changes seen later.

Gone is the traditional obedient Eve that obeys and accepts whatever is ordered. Kabita Sinha here represents herself as the modern Eve who rebels against patriarchal marginalization. The eve in the poem is portrayed as a strong and independent woman unlike Eve in the Bible. This paper views "Eve Speaks to God" from a Subaltern and Feminist perspective.

This paper examines the poem as the modern women tried to break the marginalized status by resisting the patriarchal code of conduct. The Biblical Eve is used to interpret the struggles and their fight against the gendered subaltern. The women no longer will be silenced and oppressed. They will voice against all the prejudice, discrimination, and inequality they go through for being a woman.

KEYWORDS: Subjugations, Patriarchal Marginalisation, Subaltern, Gendered Subaltern, Feminist Perspective.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy reveals that all gender constructs are designed to maintain a balanced status quo in which women are confined to a rigid code of conduct. They are expected to be moral and conscience keepers of society. Any woman challenging the gender construct by refusing their identity is considered deviant. Opposing patriarchy, we have Feminism and Gender equality which is a highlighted issue in this paper.

Kabita Sinha in her popular poem "Eve speaks to God" notes that allegations charged against Eve of the Holy Bible as nothing more than mere censure towards the entire women population. Her poem consists of the elements of subjugations and oppression undergone by women. She rises above it all and also encourages others to rise against this gendered subaltern. Kabita Sinha has expressed her ideas and emotions on themes related to the treatment of women in society.

Another similar poem by Taslima Nasreen "Eve O' Eve" is also discussed as a parallel to Kabita Sinha's "Eve speaks to God". Both poems portray the character of Eve in contrast to its traditional representation. They both empower Eve, bringing her to the godly state and praising her for her bravery. Both the poem is written in simple language, bringing to the surface a very dominant issue in society.

II. KABITA SINHA'S PORTRAYAL OF EVE

Kabita Sinha's poem Eve speaks to God is known for its modernistic characteristics and feminist aspects. In bibles and folk stories, we can see how Eve is held responsible for the loss of the paradise garden but in this poem, we appreciate and empower Eve for her doings. In the Holy Bible, Eve is portrayed as the woman who caused the fall of mankind. She was influenced by Satan and also influenced Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. Instead of simply accepting the ideas suggested in the myths, fairy tales, and the Scripture, Kabita retells

the story of Eve from the Bible from a new perspective to express her protest against patriarchal marginalization. She creates a new Eve who is a rebellious figure. She is portrayed as a bold and strong character who takes risks. She symbolizes resistance and protest.

The modern Eve says that she is the first to learn the ultimate truth of life. Life is followed by death similarly light is followed by darkness and vice versa. She is proud that she took the first bite of the forbidden fruit and gain knowledge. She was the one who understood shame and modesty by covering herself with a fig leaf.

“I was first, first pleasure my body consoled the first sorrow”.

Through these lines, she states that she was the first to discover the pleasure of the body and the first to experience the pain of giving birth. She says just like the almighty even she is capable of creating humans.

“I was never a puppet to dance to your tune like meek Adam”

This line significantly represents all the rebelling women who will no longer entertain or follow the orders of male members of society. She shows the rebelling nature that is not present in Adam. Instead of calling these acts mistakes as others presume, she carries pride in it.

She also defends her action of breaking the luxurious pleasure. She declares that she was the first to shackle the luxurious life that was given to them by God. She says that even though it was golden and luxurious it was like a prison. By making her own choice she becomes the first rebel and the first to be punished by God. However, she does not regret her actions of eating the forbidden fruit as they have taught her that life on earth is better than the lifeless paradise.

The poem offers a different approach to Eve’s actions. Kabita gave Eve a chance to tell the story from her viewpoint. She explains how a woman is the first one to experience both joy and transition of life, giving a voice to the famous mythical woman, Eve; one who is said to cause the fall of man. Kabita’s Eve refuses to surrender to patriarchal structures. She has freed Eve of the negative traits assigned to women on Eve's behalf.

She concludes by repeating that she was the first rebel on the earth. She ends the enslaving of women under men by calling the men or even the god her “slave”. Even though she may be banished from paradise for her disobedience, she feels that human life is way beyond and better than the world that imprisons her.

Kabita delineates Eve as a woman who faces the consequences of her action. She readily accepts the repercussion with pride and honor, unlike Adam who blames it all on Eve, refusing to accept his negligence. She also tries to convey that what God considered punishment turns out to be her achievement. She stands in high esteem by calling herself the first rebel on earth.

This poem deals with the theme of subjugations, patriarchal marginalization, gendered subaltern, and feminism. By giving a new dimension to the traditional Eve, the writer tries to invoke the readers to think, introspect and act. To think of the current treatment of women in the society as justified, or if the women deserve the oppression, or if the women should rise and fight against it all.

III. ANOTHER REINTERPRETATION OF EVE IN TASLIMA’S “EVE O’ EVE”

Many other writers also have taken Eve to retell the story from their perspectives. Another interpretation of Eve as a modern strong woman is observed by Taslima Nasrin. She is a Bangladeshi-Swedish writer famous for her works on women’s suppression and struggles. Similar to Kabita Sinha, Taslima also justifies the act of Eve which is eating the forbidden fruit. Even Taslima presents Eve in a light contrary to the Biblical representation of Eve.

Taslima defends Eve from the old myth about being responsible for creating chaos in the world by eating fruit. The poet begins the poem by asking the question “*Why wouldn’t Eve have eaten the fruit?*” This poem is filled with rhetorical questions to evoke the thoughts of readers instead of expecting answers.

Taslima Nasrin talks about how everything we have in this world is because of Eve. She asks why Eve would not have eaten the fruit. She further questions whether eve does not have a hand to reach or a fist to hold the fruit. She again asked if Eve didn’t have a stomach to feel hungry or tongue to feel thirst or a heart to love. Taslima shows that Eve does not have any reason not to eat the fruit. Since she has eaten the fruit, we have sky and earth, moon, sun, rivers seas, trees, plants, and vines. Since she has eaten the fruit there is joy. She has made a heaven on earth.

“Eve, if you ever get hold of the fruit don’t ever refrain from eating”

Taslima ends the poem with a strong message to the modern women. She addresses them all not to refrain from eating if they ever get hold of the fruit. In this context, we can understand that Taslima is empowering women. She tells them to not be oppressed like the old Eve but to stand for themselves and take the opportunities when they present themselves.

According to Frank, Eve symbolizes many of the negative traits assigned to women. Throughout history, the story of Eve has been used to justify the punishment of women. For example: how Eve was held

responsible for human fall; the present women are also blamed responsible for any misfortunes that happen to them.

IV. CONCLUSION

There are different ways to put an end to this society that has subjugated women throughout history. One of the ways to voice against is by retelling the traditional tales from a new approach. It will help break all the old myths, practices and ideologies and bring a difference and new change in the society.

The biblical character of Eve has been elucidated in different ways throughout history. The story will be unchanged but the stance will be changed as explained in the two poems discussed. These unique poems encourage revolution against the mindless patriarchal norms that are gender-oriented and discriminatory. The older generation might have been suppressed but the modern women will not. They are aware of their rights and freedom. They are aware of the power they hold and that they will not settle for anything less than equality.

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